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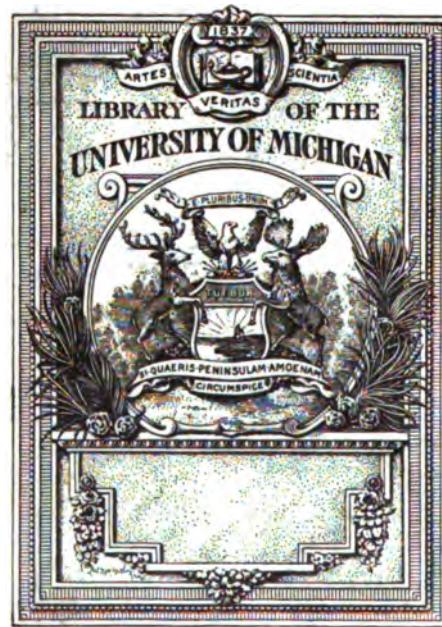
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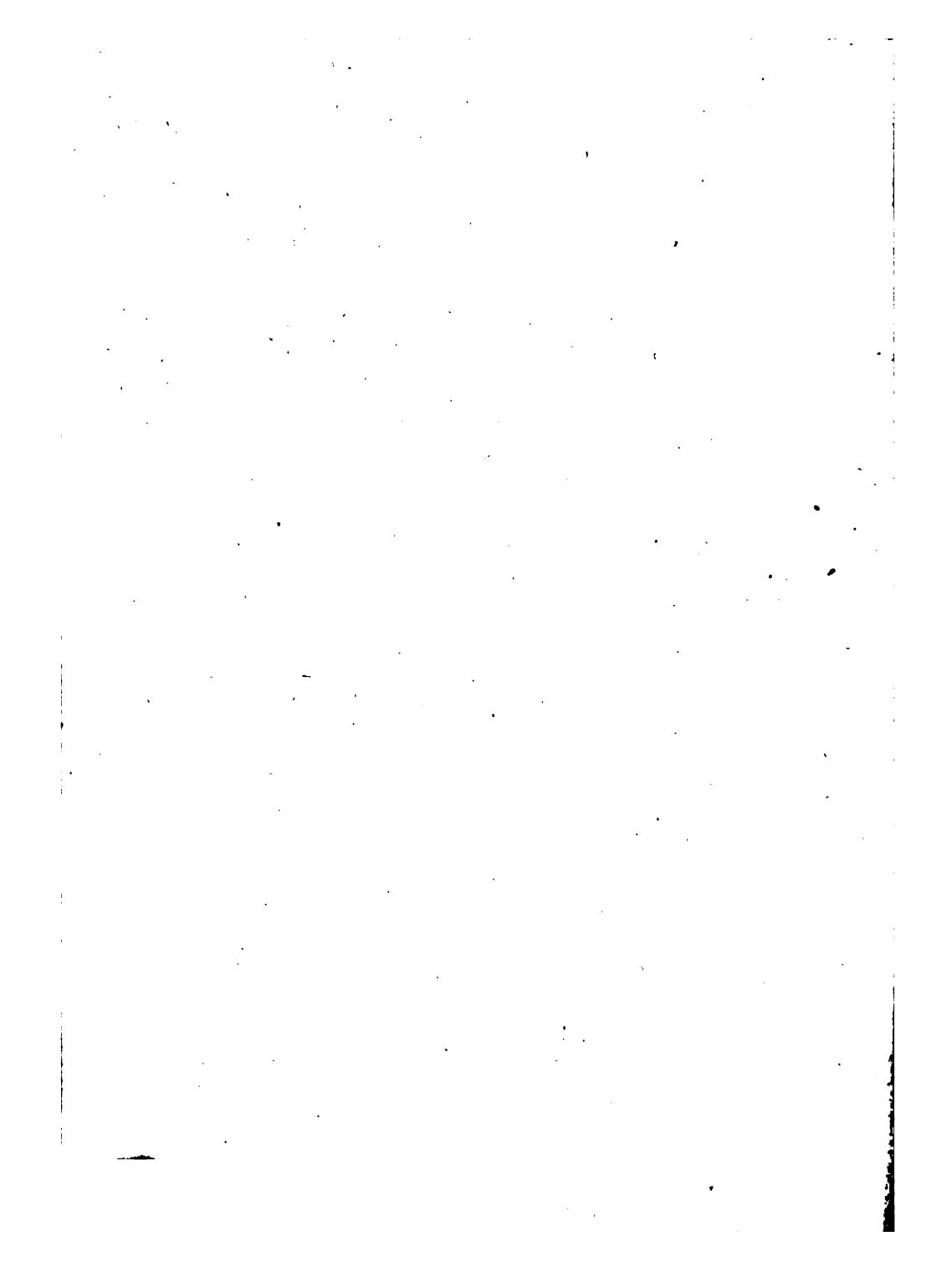
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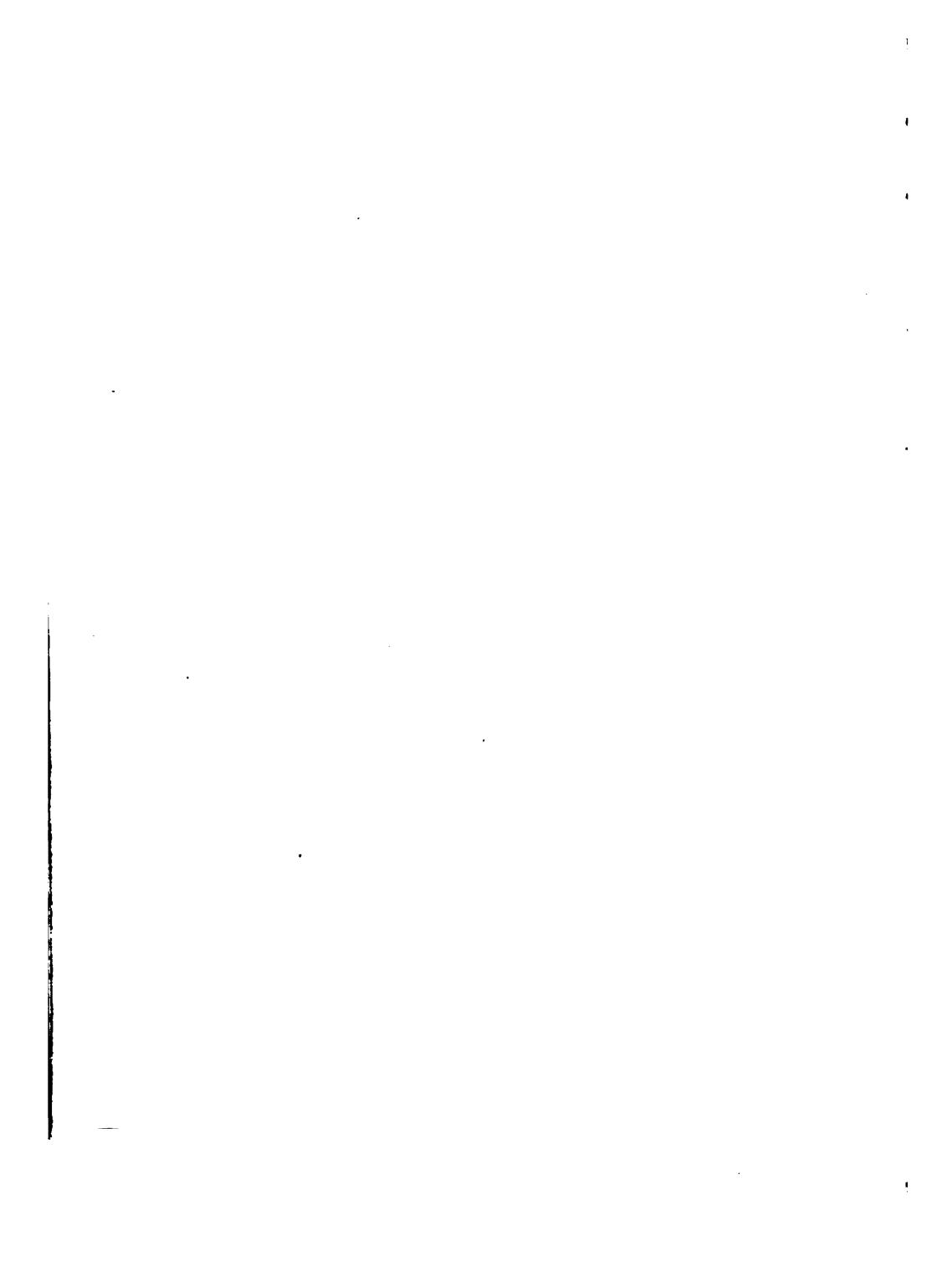


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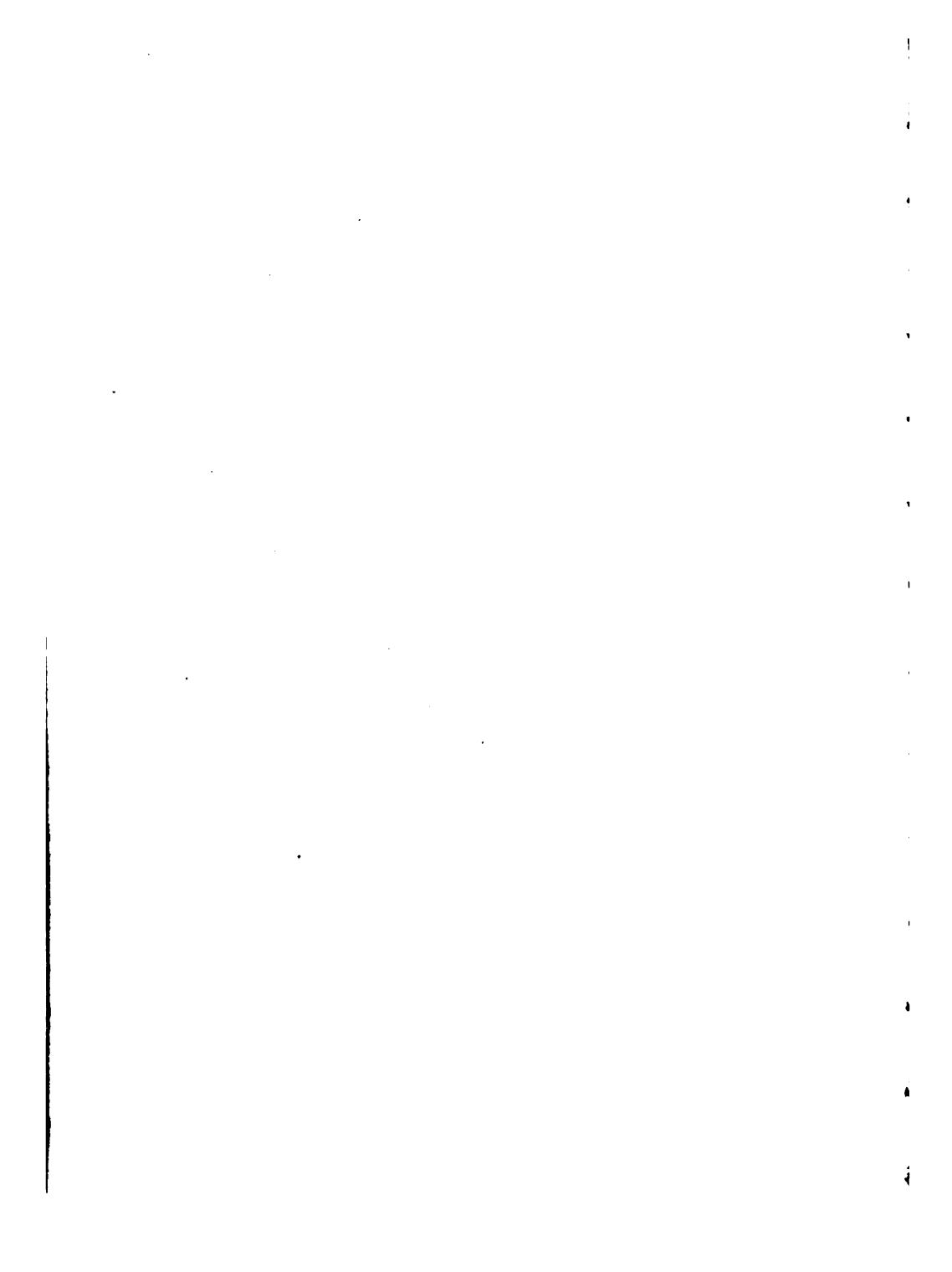




THE YOUNG MASTER OF HYSON HALL



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When Phil had taken hold of the sill, Chap gave him a lift

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The Young Master of Hyson Hall

BY

FRANK R. STOCKTON

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With Illustrations by

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PHILADELPHIA

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1900

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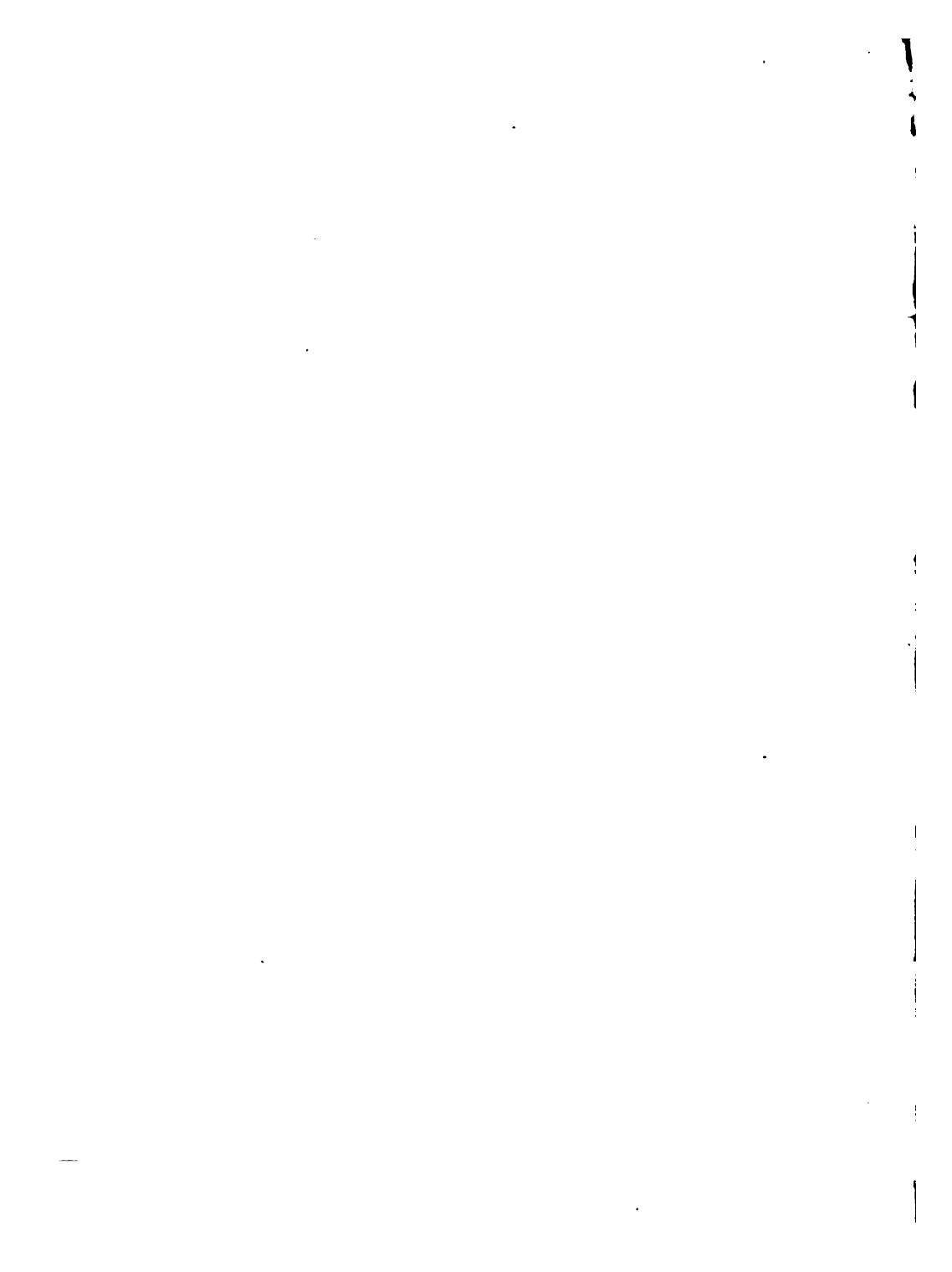
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PREFATORY NOTE

(*By the Author*)

THIS story was originally published in a paper for boys, under the title of "Philip Berkeley; or, the Master's Gun." It has recently been thoroughly revised, and a new title, which better expresses the import and purposes of the story, has been given to it upon this its first appearance in book form.

Those who may remember the story as it originally appeared will find that the master's gun still exercises the same subtle influence over the fortunes of the Master of Hyson Hall as it did when it enjoyed the honor of a place in the title.



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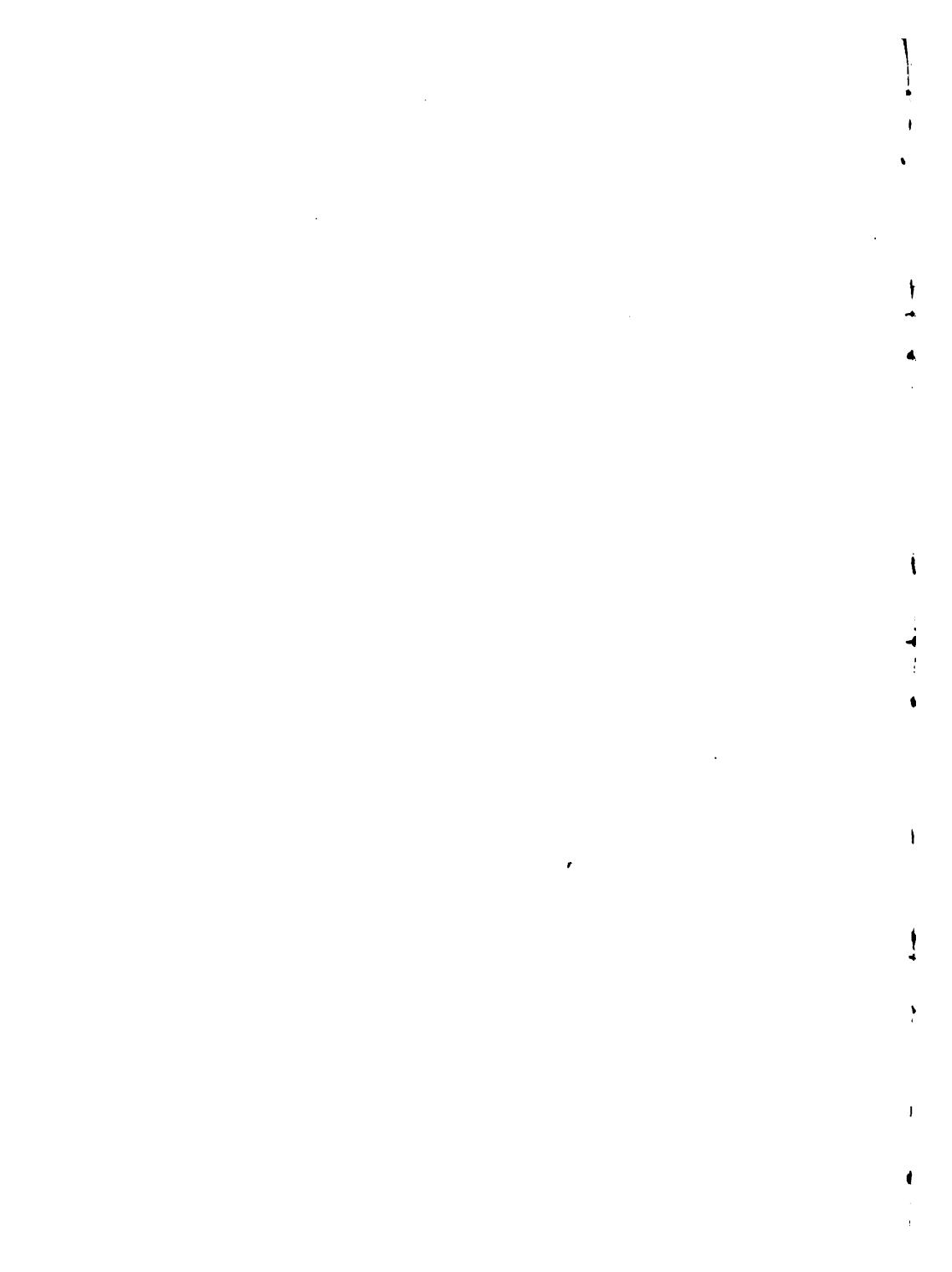
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THE YOUNG MASTER OF HYSON HALL

CHAPTER I.

OLD BRUDEN.

I MAY as well say at once that Old Bruden was the name of a double-barrelled shot-gun. It had originally belonged to a man by the name of Bruden, and by him had been traded for a cow to one of his neighbors.

From this person it had come, by purchase, into the possession of old Mr. Berkeley, of Hyson Hall, of whom I shall speak presently.

This double-barrelled shot-gun—which was now called by the name of its original owner—was not, at the time our story begins, a very valuable piece of property.

The hammer of the left-hand barrel had a hitch in it, so that it could not always be depended upon to come down when the trigger was pulled. There was also a tradition that a piece of this left-hand barrel had been blown out by Mr. Bruden, who, by accident, had put a double load into it, and that a new piece had been welded in; but, as no mark of such gunsmithery could be found on the barrel, this story was generally disregarded, especially by the younger persons who occasionally used the weapon.

Hyson Hall, the residence of Godfrey Berkeley, the present owner of the gun, was a large, square house, standing about a quarter of a mile back from the Delaware River in Pennsylvania.

It had been built by Godfrey's father, who was engaged, for the greater part of his life, in the Chinese tea-trade. When he retired from business he bought an estate of two hundred acres, on which he erected the great house, which he called Hyson Hall.

Old Mr. Berkeley was a very peculiar man, and his house was a peculiar house. The rooms were very large,—so spacious, indeed, and with such high ceilings, that it was sometimes almost impossible to warm them in winter.

The halls, stairways, and outer entrance were grand and imposing, and in some respects it looked

more like a public edifice than a private residence. The roof was flat, and was surrounded by a parapet, at various points upon which bells had been hung, in the Chinese fashion, which tinkled when the wind blew hard enough, and which probably reminded the old tea-merchant of the days and nights he had passed, when a younger man, in the land of the yellow-skinned Celestials.

But when his son, Godfrey Berkeley, came into possession of the house, he took down all the bells. He was an odd man himself, and could excuse a good deal of oddity, but these bells seemed ridiculous and absurd even to him.

At the time our story begins, the present owner of the property had not lived very long at Hyson Hall. It had been but three years since his father died, and during that time Godfrey Berkeley, then forty years old and a bachelor, devoted himself, as well as he knew how, to the management and improvement of the estate. He had been very much of a traveller ever since he was a boy, and he did not understand a great deal about farming or gardening, or the care of cows and beehives.

A wide pasture-field sloped up from the river to the bottom of the lawn, and there was an old-fashioned garden and some arable land behind the house; and Mr. Berkeley took a good deal of interest in looking after the operations of his small farm.

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Some of his neighbors, however, said that he was spending a great deal more money than he would ever get back again, and laughed a good deal at his notions about poultry-raising and improved fertilizers.

Nothing of this kind, however, disturbed the easy-going Godfrey. Sometimes he laughed at his mistakes, and sometimes he growled at them, but he asked for no advice, and took very little that was offered to him.

It is not likely, however, that Mr. Berkeley would have been satisfied at Hyson Hall had it not been for the company of Philip Berkeley, his only brother's orphan son.

Philip was a boy about fifteen years old. He and his Uncle Godfrey were great friends, and there could be no doubt about Philip's enjoyment of the life at Hyson Hall. During the greater part of the year he went to school in Boontown, a small town about three miles distant, riding there and back on a horse his uncle gave him; and during the long summer vacation there was plenty of rowing and fishing, and rambles with a gun through the Green Swamp, a wide extent of marshy forest-land, about a mile from the house.

There were neighbors not very far away, and some of these neighbors had boys; and so, sometimes with a companion or two of his own age, and

sometimes with his uncle, Philip's days passed pleasantly enough.

Godfrey Berkeley had some very positive ideas about what a boy ought to do and ought to learn, but there was nothing of undue strictness or severity in his treatment of his nephew, whom he looked upon as his adopted son.

One pleasant evening in July, Godfrey Berkeley was stretched out upon a cane-seated lounge in the great hall, quietly smoking his after-supper pipe, when Philip came hurriedly tramping in.

"Uncle," he said, "won't you lend me Old Bruden to-morrow? Chap Webster and I want to go up the creek, and, if this weather lasts, perhaps we'll camp out for a night, if you'll let us have the little tent."

Now, Philip had a gun of his own, but it was a small gun and a single-barrelled one; and as Chapman Webster, his best-loved friend, always carried a double-barrelled gun when they went out on their expeditions, Philip on such occasions generally borrowed Old Bruden.

To be sure, he seldom used the left-hand barrel, but it was always there if he needed it and chose to take the chances of the hammer coming down.

It might have been supposed that Mr. Godfrey Berkeley, who in former years had done so much travelling and hunting, would have had a better

fowling-piece than Old Bruden ; but as he now often wandered all day with a gun upon his shoulder without firing a single shot, Old Bruden would have served him very well, even if neither hammer ever came down.

Philip's requests were generally very reasonable, and his uncle seldom refused them, but this evening Mr. Berkeley seemed disturbed by the boy's words.

For a few moments he said nothing, and then he took his pipe from his mouth and sat up.

"It seems curious, Phil," he said, "that you should want Old Bruden to-morrow, and should be thinking of camping out. It's really remarkable ; you haven't done such a thing for ever so long!"

"That's because the weather hasn't been good enough," said Philip, "or else Chap Webster couldn't go. But if you are going to use Old Bruden yourself, uncle, of course I don't want it."

"Oh, it isn't that," said Mr. Berkeley, laughing a little. "But I do not want you to take the gun to-morrow, especially on any long expedition."

"Is anything the matter with it?" asked Phil, his eyes wide open. "Has it cracked anywhere?"

"I don't know, indeed," said Mr. Berkeley, "for it is so long since I fired Old Bruden that I can say very little about it. But I want you to under-

stand, my boy," he said, more seriously, "that you should never use a gun unless you know for yourself that it is in good condition. You ought to be able to tell me whether or not there is anything the matter with Old Bruden."

"Oh, I always look it over before I take it out," said Phil. "But I thought you might just have found out something about the gun."

"Not at all," said Mr. Berkeley. "As far as I know, Old Bruden is exactly the same clumsy shot-gun that it was when I first bought it. But I don't want you to go off with it to-morrow on any expedition with Chap Webster. I can't give you my reasons for this now, but you shall know all about it to-morrow. That satisfies you, don't it, my boy?"

"Oh, yes," said Phil, trying to smile a little, though not feeling a bit like it.

His uncle's discipline, whenever it was exercised at all, was of a military nature. He commanded, and Phil obeyed. The boy had learned to take a pride in that kind of soldierly obedience, about which his uncle talked so often, and it seldom bore very hard upon him.

He and Mr. Berkeley were generally of the same way of thinking, but to-night his disappointment was very hard to bear.

Several days before he had planned this expe-

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dition with Chap Webster. They had had high anticipations in regard to it, and Phil did not suppose for a moment that his uncle would offer any objection to their plans. But he had objected, and there was an end to the whole affair.

Philip walked to the front door and gazed out over the moonlighted landscape.

“It will be a splendid day to-morrow,” he said to himself, “and as dry as a chip to-night, but all that amounts to nothing.”

And he turned on his heel and went into the house.



CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH PHILIP IS VERY MUCH AMAZED.

WHEN Philip came down-stairs the next morning he found the breakfast ready, and Susan Corson, the housekeeper, standing in the middle of the dining-room, with a letter in her hand. Her countenance looked troubled, and as soon as the boy entered the room she said,—

“ Mr. Berkeley isn’t about anywhere, and here is a letter for you which I found on the hall-table. I missed him a good while ago, because he is generally up so early, and I have been up to his room and looked through the whole house; and I blew the horn and sent the boy all over the place, but he isn’t to be found at all, and I believe he has gone off somewhere, and perhaps that letter tells you all about it.”

Before this speech was half over Philip had opened the letter and was reading it. It ran thus:

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"When you read this letter, my dear Phil, I shall have run away—yes, actually cleared out and run away—from my good, kind nephew. It seems like turning things upside down for the man to run away and the boy to stay at home; but running away comes much more naturally to me than I hope it ever will to you, my very dear Philip. When about your age I began life by running away from home, and I have been doing the same thing at intervals ever since. The fact is, Phil, I have been so much of a rover, and a rambling life comes so natural to me, that I cannot any longer endure the monotonous days at Hyson Hall. It is true that I have enjoyed myself very much in the old house, and it is also true that I love you, Phil, and am delighted to be with you, and have you near me. But apart from the fact that I am tired of staying so long in one place, there are other reasons why I should go away for a time.

"And now, Phil, I want you, while I am gone, to take care of Hyson Hall and everything belonging to it. You know just how its affairs are going on, and, as you have kept my accounts for me almost from the first day you came to live with me, you know quite as much as I do about the house expenses and all that sort of thing. The next time you go to town you must take the enclosed note to Mr. Welford, my banker, and he will pay to you, from time to time, the amount I have been in the habit of drawing for regular house expenses. You see, Phil, I put a great deal of trust in you, but I don't believe I could have a steward who would suit me better. Don't spend any more money than you can help. Take good care of Jouncer, and keep everything as straight as you can. Of course, I don't expect you to stay at home all the time and have no fun, but you can see now why I did not want you to take Old Bruden and go off on a

camping expedition on the very first day of your stewardship.

“And now, good-by, my boy. I expect to write to you again before very long, and I am quite sure that until I come back you will manage the old place just as well as you can ; and if you do that, you will fully satisfy

“Your affectionate uncle,

“GODFREY BERKELEY.”

As Philip stood on one side of the breakfast-table reading this letter, Susan Corson stood on the other, gazing steadfastly at him.

“Well,” said she, “where has he gone? and when is he coming back?”

“Those are two things he doesn’t mention,” said Philip. “And I haven’t any idea what it all means.”

“Well, what does he say?” asked Susan, a little sharply. “He surely must have told you something.”

Susan Corson was a middle-aged little woman, who thought a good deal of Mr. Godfrey Berkeley and a good deal of herself, and who had had, so far, no great objections to Philip, although, as a rule, she did not take any particular interest in boys.

“I will read you the letter,” said Philip.

And he read it to her from beginning to end, omitting here and there a passage relating to himself and his uncle’s trust in him.

For a few minutes Susan did not say a word, and Philip also stood silent, looking down at the letter he held and thinking very hard.

“And while he is gone you are to be master here?” said the housekeeper.

“Yes,” said Philip; “that’s about the way to look at it.”

“Well, then,” said Susan, “there’s your breakfast.”

And she marched out of the room.

Philip sat down to the table, but he was still thinking so hard that he scarcely knew what he ate or drank. When he had about half finished his meal he heard a shout outside. He jumped up from the table and ran to the window. Standing in the roadway, in front of the house, he saw Chap Webster, who had just sent forth another shout. Phil ran out on the great stone porch.

“Hello, Chap!” he cried. “Come up here and wait till I have finished my breakfast.”

“Finished your breakfast!” exclaimed his companion. “Why, I thought we were going to make an early start! I didn’t half finish mine.”

“I’m sorry for that,” said Phil; “but just sit down here, and I’ll be out directly.”

If Philip had been the grown-up gentleman which he was sure to be if he lived long enough,

he would have asked his friend in to finish his breakfast with him ; but he was a boy, and did not think of it.

There was nothing mean about him, however ; he stopped eating before he was half done, so as not to keep Chap waiting.

Chap Webster was a long-legged boy, a little older than Philip. He had light hair, and what some of his friends called a buckwheat-cake face, —that is, it was very brown and a good deal freckled. He did not sit down at all, but stalked up and down the porch until Phil came out.

“ Are you ready now ? ” he cried, as soon as the latter appeared at the hall door.

“ No, I’m not ready,” said Phil ; “ and what is more, I am not going at all.”

Chap opened his mouth and eyes, and jammed his hands down into his trousers pockets.

“ This is a pretty piece of business ! ” he exclaimed. “ Here I’ve been up ever since sunrise getting my traps ready, and mother has put up a basket of provender, and everything is all ready for us to take up as we pass our house. I didn’t think you were that kind of fellow, Phil.”

“ I didn’t think so myself,” said his companion ; “ but there’s no use of our shooting wild this way. Just you sit down and read that letter.”

Chap took a seat on a bench, and, leaning over,

with his elbows on his outspread knees, he carefully read Mr. Berkeley's letter.

When he had finished it, and had turned over the sheet to see if there was anything more on the last page, he looked steadfastly at Phil, then whistled, and then lay back and laughed as if he would crack his sides.

Phil could see no cause for merriment, but the example was contagious, and he began to laugh, too.

"I always knew your uncle was a rare customer," said Chap, at last; "but I never thought he'd be up to a thing like this. Why, Phil," he cried, starting to his feet, "I'd rather be in your place than own a tug-boat!"

This was putting the matter very strongly, for to own a tug-boat, with which he could make a fortune by towing vessels up and down the river, was one of Chap Webster's most earnest aspirations.

"Well, what would you do?" asked Philip.

"Do!" cried Chap, with sparkling eyes. "I'd do everything! I'd have all the fellows here. I'd give the biggest kind of picnics. I'd camp out, right here in front of the house. I'd put a mast in your uncle's scow, and buy a sail for her. I'd dig up the old wreck, and I'd have fireworks every night. Do!" he added. "You'd soon see what I'd do!"

“Yes,” said Philip, laughing, “and I’d soon see you stop doing, too. A pretty steward you’d make!”

“Phil,” said Chap, suddenly changing his manner, “how long do you think he’s going to stay away?”

“I don’t know any more about it than you do,” said Phil. “There’s his letter, and that’s all there is to go by.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what it is, Phil,” said Chap, very earnestly, “if your uncle stays away long enough, there are big things ahead. You know he said you were to have fun.”



CHAPTER III.

OLD BRUDEN MAKES A MOVE.

CHAP WEBSTER did not stay very long at Hyson Hall.

“If the trip is to be given up,” he said to Phil, “I must go home and tell mother to take the things out of my basket. There’s no use letting them spoil, and the children might as well eat them. And, besides that, I’ve got a lot to think about. I tell you what it is, Phil, there’s a stack of responsibility about this thing.”

Phil could not help smiling as his long-legged friend strode rapidly away. There was certainly a great deal of responsibility attached to the new state of affairs, but why Chap need trouble his mind about it he could not imagine.

However, Chap was a great speculator in plans and projects, and took stock in such things when-

ever he had a chance. As for Phil, he truly had a great deal to think about.

What should he do, and what should he do first?

He sat on the top of the broad stone steps that led up to the porch and thought the matter out. It was one of the most uncomfortable places he could have chosen, for the sun shone full in his face, and he was obliged to shield his eyes with his napkin, which he had forgotten to leave on the breakfast-table.

The establishment at Hyson Hall was not extensive, and Phil had been such a constant companion of his uncle, and had, under Mr. Berkeley's direction, done so much of the daily management of the place, that, excepting the responsibility, there was nothing very novel in the duties of his trust.

A man and a boy were employed on the little farm, on which the only crop of any importance was a field of wheat. Until this was ready to cut there was nothing out of the way to be done on the farm. In the house the domestic force consisted of Susan Corson, who was the housekeeper and cook, a woman for general housework, and a half-grown girl named Jenny.

Phil very properly made up his mind that in regard to the general affairs of the establishment he would let them go on in the ordinary way until something unusual turned up.

If he knew that his uncle intended to stay away for any considerable time, there were some plans that he thought he could carry out with considerable profit to the estate ; but as he would not like to be interrupted in anything of the kind when it was half done, however sure he might feel that Mr. Berkeley would be well pleased with the result when all was finished, he concluded, for the present, to give up such projects.

There was enough for him to do, however, and there was no knowing what might turn up. There was only one particular injunction his uncle had laid upon him, and that was to take good care of Jouncer, and this was a matter he would attend to immediately.

And so, with one side of his head pretty well scorched, he jumped up, got his hat and ran down to the stables.

Jouncer was Mr. Godfrey Berkeley's riding-horse, and whenever he went to town, or to visit any of his neighbors, he rode Jouncer.

This animal was considered by Phil and some of his boy friends to be a horse of great possibilities. It was believed, and some of the boys considered themselves good judges of such things, that he had Arabian blood in him, and that, if required, he could gallop with great swiftness and leap over the highest fences.

Nothing positive, however, was known upon these points, for Mr. Berkeley did not care to make an animal exert itself unnecessarily, and always rode at a jog-trot.

Jouncer was found to be in comfortable circumstances, and as Phil looked at him as he was grazing in a little paddock back of the barn, he made up his mind that he would ride the noble beast, next day, to town, to see Mr. Welford.

He had never mounted Jouncer, except for very short rides on the place, and his own horse, Kit, could be brought up from the pasture just as well as not; but it seemed to him that in order to suitably represent his uncle, it would be the proper thing for him to ride his uncle's horse.

Joel, the hired man, was full of eagerness to know all about Mr. Berkeley's departure, of which he had already heard something in the house, and Phil satisfied him as well as he could, endeavoring besides to fully impress upon his mind the nature of the trust his uncle had imposed upon himself.

Joel thought it would have been much better if Mr. Berkeley had left the management of the place to him, but he was a cautious fellow and said nothing.

After dinner, which, by the way, Phil did not consider quite as good a meal as usual, he went

into the parlor to think over what he should say to Mr. Welford when he went to see him the next day.

The parlor was an immense room, very seldom used; but Phil thought it quiet and cool, and a very suitable place in which a person in his position might spend a little time after dinner.

He seated himself in a large arm-chair, but he had not cogitated more than two or three minutes before he heard a heavy step on the porch, and then a great knock at the door.

Susan was in the dining-room, and she hurried out to admit the visitor. As she approached the front door, Phil heard her exclaim, in tones of surprise,—

“Why, it’s Chap Webster!”

Phil was very much surprised, too, for this was the first time Chap had ever knocked at the front door. He generally announced his coming by a shout from some point outside of the house.

“Is the steward in?” asked Chap.

“The what?” cried Susan.

Phil laughed, and went to the parlor door.

“Come in here, Chap,” he said; “I’m in the parlor.”

Chap took off his hat, came in, and, after gazing around the spacious apartment for a moment, seated himself on a sofa.

Susan Corson stopped a moment as she passed the door.

"In the parlor!" she ejaculated. "Upon—my—word!"

And then she walked severely down into the kitchen.

"Do you generally intend to sit in here?" asked Chap. "You never did when your uncle was at home."

"I could have, if I had wanted to," said Phil.

"And of course you want to now," remarked his friend. "Some things make a great difference, don't they?"

"Yes, I suppose they do," said Phil.

"Now, I want to tell you, Phil!" cried Chap, with great animation. "I've been considering this matter all the morning, and I've come over to tell you what I've thought out. You can get eight-ounce cartridges of giant-powder at Boontown for twenty-five cents apiece. If I were you I'd buy five, and then we can go down and blow up the wreck the first night after we get them. It ought to be done at night, so that the flying timbers wouldn't strike boats."

Phil burst out laughing.

"You old humbug!" he cried. "Do you suppose that the first thing I am going to do is to blow up that ancient wreck?"

"You might get thousands of dollars out of it!" exclaimed Chap; "and I guess your uncle would be glad of that."

"Thousands of splinters!" exclaimed Phil. "But you needn't think I'm going to do anything of that kind the minute I take charge of things here."

"Take charge of things!" repeated Chap. "That sounds large and lofty. I suppose you feel like the lord of the manor. But I tell you what it is, my noble potentate, you mustn't expect to look down too much on the neighboring barons."

"It depends a good deal on the barons whether I do that or not," said Phil.

"Now, look here," said Chap, changing his tone; "if you won't blow up the wreck, will you go after muskrats to-night? It's a good moon, and I'll bring my gun, and you can take Old Bruden."

After having refused his friend so much, Phil could not decline so reasonable a proposition as this, and he consented to hunt muskrats that night.

It is true his uncle had not wished him to go on an expedition, but this would be on the river-bank, in front of the house.

Chap thereupon departed, and Phil was very glad to think of having a little sport that evening.

Muskrats were frequently found on the river-bank, and their skins were sometimes a source of a little private income to the boys, who could get twenty-five cents apiece for them in Boontown.

In the course of the afternoon Phil went upstairs to the gun-room to get Old Bruden, in order to clean it, in readiness for the evening's expedition. The gun-room was a small one on an upper floor, the walls of which were full of pegs and hooks for fowling-pieces, game-bags, and all the other accoutrements of the sportsman; but the room had never been furnished, as had been originally intended. With the exception of Old Bruden, his own little gun, and a few flasks and pouches, there had never been anything on the walls but pegs and hooks.

Old Mr. Berkeley had intended to be a sportsman, but before he could carry out his purpose had become too infirm to care about it.

Phil stepped up to the two pegs on which Old Bruden had always hung when not in use, but, to his utter amazement, the gun was not there.

He could not understand this at all. It had been one of his uncle's most inflexible rules that neither of the guns were ever to be left about the house, but were always, when brought in, to be taken to this room and hung in their places.

Could it be possible his Uncle Godfrey had

taken Old Bruden with him? He presently came to the conclusion that this must be the case, and yet he could not imagine why in the world his uncle should want to take a gun with him. Was he going on a long tramp over the country?

Another thing surprised him. None of the shot-pouches or powder-flasks were missing. What was the good of a gun without ammunition?

But these questions were too puzzling for him, and he gave them up. He took his own little gun and went down-stairs. While he was cleaning it in the back-yard, Jenny came by from the barn with some eggs in her apron.

"Jenny," said Phil, "did you see my uncle go away this morning?"

Jenny stopped, and, for a moment, was silent. Then she said,—

"I can't tell you."

"Oh, then," exclaimed Phil, "of course you saw him! Did he take Old Bruden with him?"

"He didn't tell me," said Jenny, "not to tell that I saw him go, though I don't believe he wanted me to tell. But he did tell me not to say how or when he went, and if I say he went with a gun, that would be telling how he went, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose so," said Phil. "I don't want you to disobey any orders."

And Jenny passed on to the house.

After supper, Phil laid down on the cane-seated lounge in the hall to await for Chap. He did not expect him early, for the moon did not rise until after eight o'clock, and it was of no use going out at night after muskrats until that luminary had lighted up the river-bank. He was just dropping off into a little doze, when Jenny, coming from the kitchen, ran to the lounge.

"I haven't a minute to stop," she whispered, "for Susan sent me up-stairs to light the lamp in our room, and she is coming right after me. I've found out something. I can't say anything about it now, but to-morrow I'll tell you what it is, Master Phil."

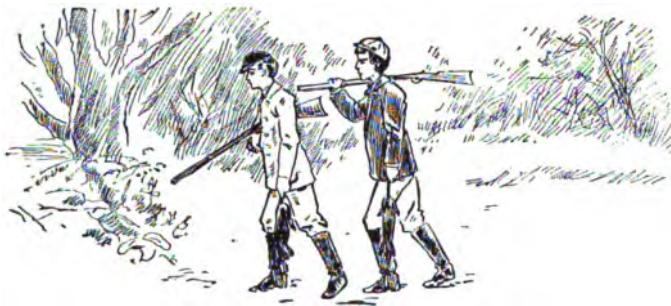
And away she ran.

Phil did not feel in the humor for guessing conundrums. He had had enough of that sort of thing for one day, and he stretched himself out again for another doze.

This time he dropped into a sleep, which lasted fifteen or twenty minutes, from which he was aroused by footsteps on the porch.

"Come in," cried Phil, jumping up.

A person entered, but he was not Chapman Webster.



CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH CHAP SHOOTS A LITTLE AND PLANS A GREAT DEAL.

THE person who entered the front door of Hysong Hall when Philip cried "Come in!" was a small, smooth-shaven man, wearing a high-crowned, black straw hat. There was a hanging-lamp burning in the hall, and as Phil sprang up to receive his visitor he could see his features distinctly, but he did not recognize him. He had never seen the man before.

"Is Mr. Berkeley in?" asked the visitor, taking off his hat.

"No, sir," answered Philip, "he is not."

"Can you tell me when he will be here? Do you expect him to-night?"

"No," said Philip, "he will not be home to-night, and I can't tell you just when he will return."

"That's curious," said the man. "I'd 'a' thought he'd told you what time he'd be back."

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Phil, not caring to pursue the previous subject any further.

"No," said the man, "I don't think there is. Is there any grown person about the house that I can speak to?"

This remark nettled Phil.

"No," said he, "there is no grown person here. My uncle left me in charge of the place, and if you have anything to say, you can say it to me."

"I hardly think I will," said the man, putting on his hat. "I guess I'll call again some time."

"All right," said Phil. And the person departed.

This visit perplexed Phil a good deal, and annoyed him also. If people did not intend to recognize him as general manager of Hyson Hall, there would be no use in his trying to go on with the business.

He wondered, too, who this man could be. He thought he knew everybody with whom his uncle ordinarily did business, but this man was a perfect stranger to him. He had been considering the matter but a short time when Chap arrived.

"Who is that old fellow out there talking to your Susan?" inquired Chap.

“Talking to Susan!” cried Phil. “Why, I thought she was in bed long ago. And why should he be talking to her?”

And with this remark he started for the door.

“Oh, you needn’t go after him,” said Chap; “he left just as I came up. Who was he?”

Phil gave his friend no further satisfaction about the man with the black straw hat, except that he was a person who had come to see his uncle. He had no disposition to talk upon the subject.

“Well,” said Chap, “are we going after muskrats? Or has that little expedition been put off?”

“We’ll do that,” said Phil, taking his gun from a corner and putting on his hat. “Come along.”

Phil locked the front door and put the key in his pocket, and then the two boys, with their guns on their shoulders, walked over the lawn and the pasture-field to the river.

It was not, perhaps, altogether wise for Phil to leave the house that night, with nobody in it but a woman and a girl, but the man, Joel, lived with his mother in a small cottage just back of the garden, and Phil himself did not intend to go out of sight of the house.

The two boys had not walked very far before Chap stopped and exclaimed,—

“Why, Phil, what are you doing with that little pop-gun?”

"Oh, this will do well enough to shoot all the muskrats we shall see," said Phil.

"But, why *didn't* you bring Old Bruden?" persisted Chap.

"Never you mind why I *didn't*!" answered Phil, a little impatiently.

He was generally a good-humored fellow, but his mind had been greatly ruffled that day.

"My Lord High Steward," said Chap, after they had walked a little way in silence, "I see what this thing is coming to. You are enveloping yourself in a cloud of mystery. That may be all very well for a fellow just starting off on a track which hasn't been surveyed yet, and which is to go nobody knows where, and no rails laid, but if you don't want me to thrust aside the cloud with my strong right arm, you'd better let me inside the fog, I tell you, my boy."

"You've got a nice lot of metaphors tangled up there," said Phil. "If you were to pick them out and hang them up to dry, in assorted sizes, a fellow might find out what you're trying to say."

The boys did not see many muskrats that evening. After a good deal of waiting and watching they shot two.

Chap proposed that they should go about half a mile farther down the river, where there were some low meadow-lands, protected by embank-

ments, and where there were generally a good many muskrats to be found.

These animals delight to burrow, and they sometimes made such extensive excavations into the embankments that these gave way, and the meadows were flooded when the tide came in.

"You know it's doing a real service to Mr. Hamlin to shoot the muskrats down there," said Chap.

Phil would have been very willing to do his neighbor a service, but he refused to go off his uncle's place.

"Well, I will tell you what let's do," said Chap. "Let's go down and look at the wreck. That is on your place, and I've never seen it by moonlight."

"Very well," said Phil, "we'll go and look at it."

The wreck, of which Chap Webster had made frequent mention, was the remains of a good-sized vessel, which was deeply embedded in the mud of the river, at one corner of the Hyson Hall estate.

At high tide it could not be seen at all, but when the tide was low a number of its forward ribs stuck up out of the mud.

It was generally believed, especially by the boys of the neighborhood, that this was the wreck of a

British sloop-of-war, which, in the time of the Revolution, had got into trouble down the river and had run up here for safety, but had afterwards been abandoned and sunk.

It was certain that the ship had come there when this part of the country was very thinly settled, for there was no one in the neighborhood who was able to give the exact facts in the case ; but the story of the British war-vessel was a very good one, and was generally believed.

Chap Webster was one of a few persons who felt sure that there was a lot of British gold buried in this wreck.

“ All war-vessels have to carry quantities of money,” he argued, “ to pay off the crew and to do ever so many other things. And then, sometimes, they have prize-money aboard.”

The two boys walked out as far as the river-beach was firm enough to give them footing, and gazed at the wreck.

The tide was at its lowest ebb, and as much of the sunken vessel was visible as it was possible to see at any time.

The prospect was certainly not a hopeful one to any person who had an idea of raising the old wreck. A few ribs stuck up in a mournful way out of the watery mud, and that was all.

“ Why, Chap,” said Phil, “ we would have to

take out twenty scow-loads of mud before we could get at the fore-part of that vessel, and then we would not find anything worth having, anyway. All the valuables on board a ship are kept in the officers' quarters, near the stern, and that is sunk in deep water."

"Mud wouldn't matter," said the sanguine Chap. "We could blow all that out at once with the giant-powder."

"And the people all over the county would think, the next morning, that it had been raining mud in the night," said Phil.

"I don't care what they'd think," said Chap; "and I'm not at all sure about the treasure being always in the stern; but if it is there, and we could lower down a big, water-tight cartridge and explode it, we might loosen things so that that they would float up."

"Money wouldn't float," said Phil.

"Do you know, Phil Berkeley," cried Chap, "that if I had a tug-boat, and could get a good hitch on to the sunken part of that ship, I believe I could pull it up and tow it into shallow water, where we could get at it?"

"If I wanted to get the sunken treasure, if there is any," said Phil, "I wouldn't like to have to wait until that time."

"Do you mean," said Chap, turning sharply

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upon him, "that you think I am never going to have a tug-boat?"

"Oh, no!" said Phil, "I didn't mean that. I only meant that I didn't believe you could move that old wreck, or anything else that is as much a part of this continent as that is now."

"Oh!" said Chap; "that's it, is it?"

Then the two boys started for home, each carrying his muskrat by the tail.



CHAPTER V.

THE MASTER'S GUN.

THE next morning Philip was sitting at the breakfast-table very much dissatisfied. He had had a poor breakfast, and he did not think that this should be. Susan need not cook as much as when there were two at the table, but certainly she might give him something good to eat. Even some eggs would have made matters different, and he had seen Jenny bringing in a lot the day before. He would have a talk with Susan on this subject, but first there were other things to be attended to. He must find Old Bruden.

“Jenny,” he said to the young girl who came in to clear away the breakfast things, “do you know anything about Old Bruden, my uncle’s double-barrelled shot-gun?”

Jenny came nearer to him, and said, in a low voice,—

"If you wait five or six minutes she'll be gone down to Joel's house, then I've got something to tell you."

Philip walked out on the porch. He remembered that Jenny had given him to understand, the evening before, that she had some sort of a mysterious communication to make, and now he supposed it was coming. He did not fancy such things at all. His own disposition, as well as his uncle's teaching and example, made him averse to having controversies or confidences with servants. He did not object so much to Jenny, for, although she occupied a menial position, she belonged to a very respectable family, and he knew that his uncle expected her to go to school the next winter at Boontown.

For these and other reasons he was much more willing to hear Jenny's story than to scold Susan about the breakfast, or to ask her what she knew of the man who came the night before. It was not very long before Jenny came out on the porch.

"Master Phil," she said, "do you know that Susan was listening to all you said to the man last night? And when he went away she slipped down the back stairs and headed him off at the corner of the house. I looked out of our window, and I heard her tell him that the young boy he'd

been talking to had made a mistake when he said there was no grown person in the house, for she was there, and if he had any message to leave for Mr. Berkeley he might leave it with her. The man said he supposed she was grown, though she wasn't very large; but he guessed he'd keep his messages and deliver them himself. And then Susan told him that there was no knowing when Mr. Berkeley would be back, and that she knew a great deal more about family affairs than that boy inside did. 'Very well,' said the man, 'perhaps, when I come again, I'll ask for you, if Mr. Berkeley isn't here. What's your name?' And then she told him her name, and he went away."

"You'd make a good reporter," said Phil; "but I don't think there is much in all that. It isn't a nice thing, Jenny, to be listening out of windows to what people are saying."

"That mayn't be much," said Jenny, not at all disconcerted; "but I can tell you something that is much. I can tell you where Old Bruden is."

Phil suddenly became all animation. He had already ceased to care about the man with the black straw hat, but the whereabouts of Old Bruden was quite another affair.

"Where is it?" he asked, eagerly.

"It is up in our room, under Susan's bed," said Jenny.

“How in the world did it get there?” asked Philip, in much surprise.

“She put it there herself, but what for I don’t know.”

“Go right up-stairs and get it,” said Phil.

And away ran Jenny.

She soon reappeared, carefully holding the gun out before her with both hands.

“Which end of it is loaded?” she said.

“Neither end, you goose,” replied Philip. “When there is a load in it, it is about the middle.”

“I don’t know anything about guns,” said Jenny. “I meant which side of it is loaded?”

“There isn’t any load in it now,” said Philip. “We always fire off the guns before we bring them in.”

And he drew out the ramrod and rattled it down one of the barrels.

“Why, there *is* a load in it!” he cried; “although there isn’t any cap on. I’d like to know what this means, and why Susan took Old Bruden, anyway. Just you take this gun and carry it carefully back up-stairs and put it where you found it. You needn’t be afraid of it, for it can’t go off; it isn’t capped. And then go to the kitchen, and as soon as Susan comes in tell her I want to see her.”

When Susan made her appearance in the hall,

where Philip was walking up and down, her countenance wore a very stern expression.

“Is anything the matter?” she said, shortly.

“Yes, there is a good deal the matter,” said Philip. “In the first place, do you know where my uncle’s double-barrelled gun is?”

To this question Susan made no immediate answer, but, with a cloth she held in her hand, she began to dust the hall table.

“Haven’t you seen it?” repeated Philip.

“You’ve got a gun of your own,” said Susan, without turning around. “Isn’t that enough for you?”

“That is not the question. I want to know where Old Bruden is.”

“I don’t believe in boys having double-barrelled guns,” said Susan, “or any guns at all, for that matter.”

“It makes no difference to me what you believe or what you don’t believe,” said Philip, whose temper was gradually getting the better of him.

He remembered, however, his Uncle Godfrey’s frequently repeated precept, that a gentleman never quarrels with a servant, and restrained himself.

“Susan,” said he, “you know very well where that gun is, and I want you to get it and hang it on the pegs in the gun-room, where it belongs.”

"You talk as if you were the master of everybody here," said Susan.

"I am head of this house until my uncle comes back," said Philip, "and I want you to understand it."

"And suppose I don't choose to understand it?" said Susan.

"Then I'll get somebody who will!" retorted Philip, quickly.

The idea of getting any one to fill her place seemed so absurd to Susan that she could not help giving a little laugh.

"Is that all you have to say?" she asked.

"That is all," said Philip; "but I wish you to remember it."

Then Susan walked off to the kitchen. Phil had intended to speak to her in regard to the meals, but he forgot all about that.

This little contest was now over, and Philip did not know whether he had conquered or not. He was obliged to be content to wait and see what the result would be, and, in the mean time, there was a good deal for him to do.

He put his uncle's letter to Mr. Welford in his pocket and went down to the stables.

If Joel had resisted his authority, or questioned his orders, it is likely there would have been a serious outbreak of temper; but Joel was a cau-

tious man, and, although he was a good deal surprised when Philip requested him to put the saddle and bridle on Jouncer, he immediately stopped the work he was doing and went to the paddock. At the gate, however, he stopped.

"If you'd rather have your own horse," he said, "I can send Dick down to ketch him."

"No, I'd rather have Jouncer this morning," said Philip.

And Jouncer was saddled and bridled.

Philip had been gone about twenty minutes, when Susan came down to the stable-yard.

"And so he's gone off on his uncle's horse," said she. "He's getting high and mighty ! He's just been ordering me to take that gun and hang it on the pegs I got it from!"

"How did he know you had it?" asked Joel.

"He asked me where it was, and as I didn't deny it, of course he knew I had it."

"Why don't you put it back?" said Joel. "You don't want it."

"I tell you what it is, Joel Burress !" said Susan ; "you are a new-comer here, and you don't understand things as I do !"

"I've been here two years," said Joel.

"And I lived here eleven years with old Mr. Berkeley, and since then with Mr. Godfrey. Before that I lived five or six years with old

Abram Bruden. I know all about that gun. It used to hang over old Abram's kitchen fireplace, and nobody ever took it down but himself. It was always called the Master's gun, and if any of his sons, or anybody about the place, wanted to shoot they got some other gun, or went without. But when his son Charlie's wife came there to be head of the house, and wanted a big yellow cow belonging to Silas Wingo, old Abram, who was getting a little weak in his mind anyway, and who hadn't much money just then, traded off the gun to Silas for the cow. Silas Wingo was a man who would always a great deal rather shoot than milk. Now, just see what happened ! In a precious little while after that gun left the house nobody ever thought of old Abram as being the master there. From that time till the day of his death he hardly ever had a word to say about his own affairs. And after a while Silas got hard up, and brought the gun round to old Mr. Berkeley, and sold it to him for twice as much as it was worth, I dare say. It wasn't long after that before Silas was sold out of house and home; but his creditors let him live in a little house on his own farm, where he had been a pretty hard-headed master. Mr. Berkeley kept the gun as long as he lived, and was always head of his house, I can tell you. And so is Mr. Godfrey, too."

"I suppose you think," said Joel, "that if young Phil has the gun he will be the real master now."

"I don't want no boys over me," said Susan, curtly.

"Havin' the gun don't make any difference," said Joel. "All the things you've told of could 'a' happened if there'd never been a gun in the world."

"It's no use talking to me like that," said Susan. "There's something in these things. That gun is the Master's gun, and always has been."

"When do you really guess the head-master'll come back?" asked Joel, very willing to change the subject.

"I don't guess anything about it," answered Susan.

"Perhaps he's gone to see some of his relations," remarked Joel.

"He hasn't got many of them," said the house-keeper. "His brother is dead, and this boy is the only child; and old Mr. Berkeley only had two sons and a daughter; and she married a Frenchman, and died somewhere out West. Godfrey was the youngest, but he got this place; though, whether the old man ever built houses for the others I don't know."

Joel laughed.

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“Then he hasn’t much of a family to visit, and perhaps he’ll be back all the sooner.”

“Humph!” said Susan. “He’s gone to see no relations.”

And she went back to the house,



CHAPTER VI.

ARABIAN BLOOD.

PHILIP made up his mind that he would ride into town in a quiet and dignified way. To be sure, he would have been glad to find out what Jouncer was really made of, and whether or not, if he were put to his mettle, he would show any signs of that Arabian blood which some of the boys believed to be coursing in his veins. But he would do nothing of this kind to-day. He was going on a business errand, to see one of the principal men of Boontown, and he would ride his uncle's horse as his uncle always rode him.

But Jouncer had not jogged along on the turnpike road more than a quarter of a mile before the sound of rapidly-approaching wheels was heard behind him.

“Hello, Phil!” cried the well-known voice of
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Chap Webster. "I didn't believe it at first, but it's really true. Why, you are on Jouncer!"

Phil turned, and saw behind him a spring-wagon, drawn by a small gray horse, and driven by a short and very stout boy, by whose side sat Chap Webster.

"Hello, Phœnix!" said Phil. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to town after father," said the stout boy.

This youth's name was Phineas Poole, but his boy friends called him Phœnix, and by that name he was generally known.

"But what are you doing on Jouncer?" cried Chap.

"Well," said Phil, with an air as if the matter was of slight importance, "I thought I'd ride him into town to-day. He ought to be exercised, you know."

"Well, why don't you exercise him?" said Chap, very earnestly. "If I was on his back I wouldn't be crawlin' along like that. If you ever want to find out whether he has got Arabian blood in him or not, now's your chance."

"What would you do?" asked Phil.

"Do!" cried Chap. "Why, I'd put him across that ditch, and over that fence, and I'd clip it in a bee-line straight across the fields to town!"

"Clip both your legs off," said Phil, "and break his neck! I'm not going to make such a fool of myself the first day I ride my uncle's horse."

"Upon my word!" said Chap, in a desponding voice; then addressing himself to Phoenix, he said, "I do believe that Phil Berkeley is nothing but a humdrumist, after all! And to think of his opportunities! Come, Phoenix, touch up Selim, and let's get along to town. It will be time enough to go at this rate when we take to riding cows."

Selim was a resolute little horse, who, when he was touched up, generally did his best, and so, the moment he felt the whip, he put his head down as low as he could get it, and began to work his sturdy legs with as much rapidity as if a heavy head of steam had just been let on to the engine which moved his machinery, and the spring-wagon passed rapidly by Jouncer and went rattling ahead.

Now, Phil was a boy of spirit, and did not like this treatment at all. Without a moment's hesitation he jammed his heels into Jouncer's sides and urged him forward. Jouncer, too, was a horse of spirit, and never fancied being passed on the road, often giving his master considerable trouble on such occasions, and it is likely, therefore, even if he had not felt Philip's heels, that he would have made haste to overtake that spring-wagon, and

now, having a double motive, he struck into a gallop, and soon caught up with the vehicle.

“Hi!” shouted Chap, in great excitement, turning around, and half standing up as he spoke; “don’t let him pass us! Whip up Selim! That Jouncer can’t beat us into town! Good-by, Phil!”

When Selim felt the whip again—and it came down a good deal harder this time—he put on more steam, and as he had been trotting as fast as he could before, he now began to run. After him came Jouncer, clattering furiously on the hard turnpike.

“It is ridiculous,” thought Phil, “for a little horse like that, with a wagon and two boys behind him, to keep ahead of Jouncer and me,” and with his heels and a little riding-cane he carried, he began to urge his horse to greater speed.

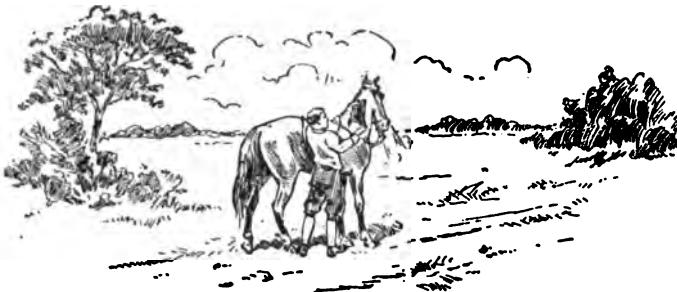
Jouncer’s blood, whatever kind it was, now began to boil, and he soon needed no urging. Turning a little to the left, he galloped so vigorously that it seemed that he must quickly pass the wagon. But Selim was a stanch little horse, and could run at a high speed,—for a short distance, at any rate,—and the wagon behind him seemed to be a matter he did not consider at all. He clattered bravely on, and still kept the lead, Chap shouting wildly, and Phœnix bringing down the whip every now and then with a resolute whang.

A loaded hay-wagon was now seen ahead, and it was with some difficulty that the stout Phoenix turned his horse so as to pass on one side without a collision.

Jouncer passed on the other side, and when the rider and the drivers came in sight of each other again, Jouncer was ahead, and after that he kept the lead, galloping as madly as if he were carrying the news to Aix.

The boys in the wagon, for a short time, pushed on after him at their best speed, but soon perceiving that they could not catch up with Jouncer, and that they were beaten in the race, they pulled up their panting and dripping little horse, and let him walk the rest of the way to town.

Philip, as soon as he saw that he had won in the trial of speed, began to pull up Jouncer, but he did no more than begin, for he found the undertaking too much for him. Arabian blood seemed to give a hardness to the jaw, a stiffness to the neck, and a power of leaping and bounding to the body of a horse which he had never dreamed of. He could not stop Jouncer at all, and so went dashing along the turnpike until he thundered wildly into the main street of the town, which, as it was market-day, was pretty well thronged with vehicles and people.



CHAPTER VII.

WHAT JOUNCER PUT HIS FOOT INTO.

JOUNCER's hoofs made such a clatter on the hard pavements of the main street of Boontown that the people had time to scatter to the right and left, while the horse guided himself clear of the wagons and buggies.

Philip had no power to stop or to turn him. All he could do was to stick on, which he did right well.

Everybody saw that it was a runaway. The boys shouted, and some of the women screamed, and one negro man ran out into the street to stop the horse, but his courage failed him as Jounce approached, and he let him pass.

The wildly galloping horse had passed more than half through the town, when a man who was about to cross the street suddenly heard or saw the rapidly approaching animal, and gave a

quick start backward. His heels slipped or struck something, and he fell sprawling on his back, a bundle he carried rolling one way and his hat another.

Jouncer passed quite close to him as he lay upon the ground, but Philip could not tell whether the horse's hoofs struck the man or not.

He turned his head to look back, but just at this moment Jouncer went round a corner, and, rushing along a side street, was soon out in the open country.

When he found himself on an uneven and dusty road, the horse seemed to lose his taste for galloping, and very soon slackened his pace. He then moderated the boiling of his Arabian blood to such a degree that his rider was enabled to pull him in, and finally to stop him.

Philip dismounted, and as he stood by the roadside, with the bridle in his hand, he could not help feeling glad that neither his uncle nor Joel were there at that moment to see Jouncer.

It was a very hot day, and the noble animal looked as if he had taken a Russian steam-bath, and had had a little too much of it. His sides were heaving, he was puffing hard, and every hair was dripping, but the queerest thing about him was a black straw hat, through the crown of which he had thrust one of his hind feet, and which was now stuck fast above his fetlock.



Philip could not tell whether the horse's hoofs struck the
man or not

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Philip made the horse lift his foot, and he pulled off the hat. Then he exclaimed,—

“I’ve seen this hat before, and I am sure I never saw but one of the kind. I remember now. It belonged to the man who came to see uncle last night. I hope I haven’t hurt him, whoever he is.”

Much troubled in his mind, Philip took the hat in one hand and Jouncer’s bridle in the other, and led the horse slowly back to town. He would have first rubbed him down, but he had nothing to do it with.

Not caring, after his John Gilpin ride, to re-enter the main thoroughfare of the town, he went along a side street until he reached a shady spot, not very far from Mr. Welford’s office.

Jouncer was beginning to dry off by this time, and, having tied him to a tree, Philip walked up the main street. He first went to the store where his uncle generally bought groceries and other supplies, and going up to Mr. McNeal,—one of the partners, with whom he was acquainted,—he asked him if he had heard that anybody had been hurt by a runaway horse a short time before.

Mr. McNeal had not heard of any accident of the kind, and rather guessed if anything of that sort had occurred he would have known of it, for people had been coming to the store pretty steadily all the morning.

Philip then told him about the runaway and the man who had tumbled down, and concluded by asking him if he might leave that hat there to be called for.

"Very well," said Mr. McNeal, taking the hat. "I'll hang it up in a safe place; but it strikes me that the owner of this had better buy a new one."

"It isn't hurt much," said Phil. "I looked at it carefully. The top of the crown can easily be sewed on, and it is pretty fine straw, you see."

"Yes," said the other, "it has been a good hat, but I don't think I ever saw another like it, though I've sold a good many hats myself. After all, if the man who wore it likes this kind of hat, I guess he'll want this one back again, for he's not apt to get another like it—at least, in this town. It must belong to a stranger, for nobody here wears such a thing."

The hat was then put away, and Philip, having borrowed half a sheet of paper, wrote thereon a notice to the effect that any one having lost a black straw hat might get it by applying at the store of Henderson & McNeal, and describing the article.

He then went round to the post-office, near by, and stuck up this notice by the side of the main door, in company with a great many other notices of cows and horses for sale, articles lost, and matters of that nature. After this he went to see Mr. Welford.

The banker was a quiet, middle-aged man, who knew Philip very well, the boy having frequently visited his office to attend to business for his uncle. He read Mr. Godfrey Berkeley's note.

"It is very strange," he remarked,—"very strange! Didn't he tell you when he was coming back?"

"No, sir," answered Philip; "but I thought he might have said something about it in your note."

"Not a word," said Mr. Welford. "And I am very sorry, indeed, that I did not know that he was going away at this time. It might have prevented a good deal of trouble. But there is nothing to be done now but to carry out his instructions. You can draw the money you need in the manner he mentions here, and, of course, you will be as economical as you can in your expenditures. I hope he won't be gone very long; but, in the mean time, we must get on the best we can."

He looked at Philip a moment, and then he said,—

"You are a young fellow to have charge of a house and farm, though I suppose your uncle knew what he was about. How did you come to town?"

This question was asked as a sort of finishing remark to the conversation, and the banker picked up some papers which lay on his desk.

"I rode in," said Philip, "on uncle's horse."

Mr. Welford turned suddenly, as if the thought had just struck him.

"Was that you," he said, "who went tearing up the street a while ago?"

"Yes, sir," said Philip. "The horse ran away with me."

"I thought your uncle's horse was a very gentle beast? At least he always seemed so to me."

"He is gentle, as a general thing," said Philip; "but the fact is, I had a little race on the road, and that got his blood up."

"Oh!" said Mr. Welford.

And then Philip took his leave.

"I am sorry he's that kind of boy," said the banker to himself, as he took up his papers again. "I hope Godfrey Berkeley will not stay away long."

As Philip went to get his horse he found a man holding him by the bridle.

"Do you know," said the man, "that there's a fine of five dollars for tying a horse to a tree in this town?"

Philip's heart went right down into his boots.

"No, sir," he said; "I didn't know it at all."

"Well, there is," said the other; "and, as I had to wait for a customer who's going to meet me here, I untied the horse and held him. I thought I might save somebody five dollars, before a town

constable came along. There's only two of them, to be sure, but they're as likely to be in one place as another."

Phil's heart came out of his boots with a bound.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," he said.
"I didn't know anything about that law."

The man was a tall and rather coarsely dressed person, wearing a linen coat and high boots, into which his trousers were thrust.

As Phil looked up at him, he saw that he had a very pleasant and kindly countenance.

"You've ridden your horse pretty hard," said the man. "He looks as if you had been salting him down. Did you come in town for a doctor?"

"No," said Phil.

And then he explained how Jouncer had happened to travel so fast.

"If you want to race a horse," said the other,— "that is, if you do such things at all,—you ought to wait for cooler weather. It is pretty hard on a beast to make him run on a day like this."

"But I didn't make him do much of it," said Phil. "He did almost all the hard running on his own account."

"I tell you what it is," said the man, with a smile, "when a horse has a human bein' on his back, nearly all the brains of that party is to be found under the rider's hat; and if them brains

ain't put to good use there's always a pretty fair chance of trouble."

Phil agreed that this was so, and, mounting Jouncer, he bade the man good-by and rode homeward.

When about half a mile out of town he overtook a boy walking in a foot-path by the side of the turnpike.

"Hello, Phœnix!" cried Phil; "what are you doing here?"

"Going home," said Phœnix.

"But why are you walking?" asked Phil, as he rode slowly by the side of his sturdy friend.

"Well," said Phœnix, "the old man was awful mad when he saw Selim. Chap and I did think of driving the horse into the river, so that he'd get wet even all over; but then there wasn't any good reason for giving him a wash, and Chap and I thought it might hurt him to drive him in when he was so hot."

"It would have killed him, sure!" exclaimed Phil.

"That's what Chap and I thought," said Phœnix, "and we didn't do it."

"So your father was mad, was he?" said Phil.

"Mad is no word for it," replied his friend. "He just blazed; and when he got through he told me that, as I had had such an extra good

time riding into town, I might walk home. Chap wanted to walk with me, but he wouldn't let him. But I tell you one thing, I'd a great sight rather walk home than ride with the old man to-day."

"I'll take you up behind me," said Phil, "if you say so. I don't believe Jouncer will mind it."

"Much obliged," said Phoenix, taking off his hat and wiping the perspiration from his heated forehead, "but I guess I won't. I rather like walking, especially on a fine day like this."

"A blazing fine day," said Phil, laughing; "but if I can't do anything for you I'll push on, or I'll be late for dinner."



CHAPTER VIII.

CHAP ENTERS THE FOG.

THAT afternoon Phil went up into the gun-room to see if Susan had obeyed his orders in regard to putting Old Bruden back into its proper place, but the gun was not there.

He was a good deal annoyed at this, for he did not want to have any further dispute with the house-keeper; but he comforted himself by thinking that perhaps she had not yet been up-stairs, and that she would replace the gun that night when she went to her room.

But the next morning, when he visited the gun-room, Old Bruden was not to be seen.

Things now looked very gloomy to our young friend. He did not like quarrelling, and hard words, whether given or taken, were equally unpleasant to him; and yet he plainly saw that if his authority was to be worth anything that he

must have a conflict with the housekeeper, which would be pretty sure to be a tough one.

He had already suggested an improvement in his meals, which had been received by Susan in a very contemptuous way.

While he was trying to make up his mind as to what course he would take to bring the housekeeper to a proper sense of his position, he saw Chap Webster coming up to the house. It was evident from his friend's countenance that he had a plan on his mind.

"Hello, Phil!" cried Chap, "I'll tell you a splendid thing for this afternoon. We'll take our guns and go over to the Green Swamp. We are pretty sure to get a shot at something,—big black-snakes, perhaps, and I want one to stuff,—and then we may find the lonely sumach."

Among the boy-beliefs of that neighborhood was one that in or about the centre of the Green Swamp there stood a large and poisonous sumach-tree, which, like the direful upas of Java, dealt out death to all who ventured beneath its shade.

Next to owning a tug-boat and blowing up the old wreck, Chap's dearest desire was to find this tree. Not that he wished to venture beneath its shade, but he wished to see it, and to go just under its outer twigs, so that if he began to feel sick or faint, he would be pretty sure that he

would die should he go all the way under, and that this was actually a poisonous sumach-tree, just as good as a real upas.

“Chap,” said Phil, “you are always going in for something watery. I believe that in a former state of existence you were a stork.”

“That may be,” said Chap; “and I’m a pretty long-legged bird yet. But what do you say to the swamp? I expect it has dried up a good deal this hot weather, and if we are careful in stepping from one hummock of grass to another, perhaps we won’t get into the mud and water. But you must carry Old Bruden this time, for we may have to take two or three shots at a blacksnake, and long shots, too.”

Phil had begun to cheer up under the influence of Chap’s animation, but his spirits now fell again. He was silent for a moment, and then he said,—

“Chap, let’s go down under the old chestnut-tree and have a talk. I want to tell you something.”

He had resolved to take his friend into his confidence. This sort of thing was too much for one boy to bear alone.

“Any time in pleasant weather, till the burrs begin to stiffen, I don’t mind sitting under a chestnut-tree,” said Chap, as he took his seat beside Phil, beneath the great tree at the bottom of

the lawn, "but after that I prefer some other kind of shade. Now, what have you got to tell?"

Thereupon Phil related the facts of Susan's insubordination and the various other out-of-way events that had happened lately.

"It is just what I told you, Phil," said Chap. "You are in a regular cloud. But now that you have let me into the fog, we will go to work and scatter it like a hurricane. I tell you it is a regular rebellion that's rising up here, and it's got to be crushed out in the bud!"

"Nipped, you mean," Philip suggested.

"Nipped, frozen, squashed! anything, so that we get our iron heel on it! I go in for throttling her, and holding her head under water until she blubbers!"

"Who? Susan?" asked Phil.

"Well, not exactly Susan," said Chap, "but the whole spirit of rebellion. I'd begin with the housekeeper. She should be reduced to submission or crumbled into ashes. And as for Joel, if he cuts up rough when you want Jouncer again, as you say you think he may, I'd come down on him like a clap of thunder at the very first sign of mutiny. And the man who came here on a secret mission, I'd settle *him*. I'd ride into town and get his hat if he hasn't called for it yet, and I'd put up a notice that he must come here, to this

house, for his hat ; and when he came I'd make make him divulge his reasons for wearing such a hat, and tell where he got it ; and he should never cross that threshold till he laid bare the object of his midnight visit."

"It wasn't midnight," said Phil.

"Well, then, whatever time of night it was. And I'll tell you another thing. I don't altogether like the way Mr. Welford acted. From what you say, I don't think he came up to the mark as lively as he should have done. I'd keep my eye on him, too."

"You wouldn't do anything to Mr. Hamlin who lives beyond the meadows, would you ?" said Phil.

"Why, no !" exclaimed Chap, looking around in surprise. "What has he got to do with it ?"

"Oh, nothing," said Phil. "I only supposed you might think it mean to leave him out of the general vengeance. But I tell you, Chap, you're too lofty and tremendous, with your thunder-claps and your iron heel. These people don't need anything like that."

"Don't you believe a word of it !" exclaimed Chap. "It isn't the big, savage hen-hawks that give the most trouble and are hard to get rid of. It's the potato-bugs. That's where your iron heel comes in. If you don't scrunch this thing in the

egg it will get ahead of you. You may just rest certain of that."

"Well, let's scrunch," said Phil. "How would you begin?"

"I can't say just exactly what I'd do first," answered Chap; "but suppose we divide things. I'll take Susan and you take Joel, and then I'll take the man with the black straw hat, and you can have Mr. Welford."

"You are choosing the heavy end of the load," said Phil.

"That suits me," said Chap. "I like to give a good lift when I get well under a thing with some heft in it."

Phil did not fancy the idea of his friend undertaking to reduce Susan to proper submission; but, as Chap seemed fairly aching for the job, and as he had been such a frequent visitor to the house, and, being a very social boy, was really more intimate with Susan than Philip himself was, the latter finally consented that Chap's arrangements should be carried out.

"But don't come down too heavy at first," said Phil. "I don't want her annihilated—only reformed."

"All right!" said Chap. "I'll start in as mild as a pot of bonny-clabber."

"Chap," cried Phil, as a happy idea struck him,

"you come here and stay for a few days. Your folks will let you, I know."

"Boy," cried Chap, springing to his feet, "you are beginning to show signs of life! I'll go and ask them."

And away he went, like a pair of compasses going mad.

It was not thought strange in the Webster family that Philip Berkeley, being left alone in the great house where he lived, should want one of his boy friends to stay with him for a time during his uncle's absence; and, as Chap was not particularly needed at home, permission was given him to go and visit Philip for a few days.

The strictest injunctions, however, were laid upon him to behave himself in as quiet and orderly a way as if Mr. Godfrey Berkeley were at home.

"Orderly?" said Chap to himself, as he put a few clothes into a very large valise. "I should think so! Why, I'm going there to establish order!"



CHAPTER IX.

CHAP'S IRON HEEL.

WHEN Chap entered Hyson Hall that afternoon, with his big valise, he met the housekeeper at the door.

"How do you do, Susan?" he said, with his most radiant expression of countenance.

Susan nodded as she looked, in surprise, at the valise.

"What have you got in that?" she asked.

"My dress suit," said Chap, blandly; "or, at least, it mostly holds the suit I dress in at night. I've come to stay with you for a while, Susan," he added, with as sweet a smile as he could call up.

"Stay awhile!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Chap. "Poor Phil is so lonely! My folks were glad enough to let me come."

"I should think so," cried Susan, getting very

dark in the face ; " and do they suppose I'm going to cook and slave for two boys ? "

" Oh, you needn't slave at all, Susan !" said Chap, almost tenderly. " All you have to do is to cook a little more than twice as much as you do for Phil, and I'm content."

" Did he ask you to come ? That Philip ? " said Susan.

" Oh, yes, indeed ! " said Chap. " You don't suppose that I'd go about visiting houses, for a week at a time, without being asked ? And now, which is to be my room ? I can carry my baggage up there myself."

" You can sleep where you choose, " said Susan, " in the cellar, the parlor, or the top of the house. This goes ahead of anything yet ! "

And off she marched.

Phil was not in the house when Chap arrived ; but when he came in, and his visitor told him of his interview with the housekeeper, he laughed heartily.

" Why, Chap, " he said, " you did begin mild, sure enough. I didn't think you could be as dulcet as that."

" Oh, yes, " said Chap, " that is the way to do it. I pulled on my heaviest woollen sock over my iron heel. But the heel is there, my boy,—it's there."

"Not a very original simile," remarked Phil.

"It'll do for the country," said Chap, "and a velvet glove is very different from a woollen sock, if you happen to have cold feet."

Chap easily gave up the expedition to the cedar swamp that day, as it was agreed that the black-snakes and the lonely sumach would probably wait until proper possession of Old Bruden could be regained, and the rest of the day was chiefly spent in laying out plans for future operations.

Susan took no steps to prepare a sleeping apartment for the visitor, but she gave the boys a very good supper, for, despite her anger, she did not want Chap Webster to go home and tell his family that she did not know how to keep house.

By Phil's directions, however, Jenny prepared a room for Chap, and the next morning operations were begun to put down all rebellion, actual or expected.

Phil did not forget, however, that he had the business of the house and farm to attend to, and to this he resolved each day to give the first place. After breakfast, therefore, he informed Chap that he intended to ride over to a neighbor's farm to see about some oats which had been bought before his uncle's departure, but which had not yet been delivered.

"You can come along, if you like," said Phil.

“Kit has been turned out to grass, but I can have him caught.”

“That means you are going to ride Jouncer?” said Chap.

“Yes, I intend to ride him,” Phil replied.

“Good boy!” cried Chap. “You’ll kill two birds with one stone. You’ll see about the oats, and you’ll have a chance to open fire on Joel, if he shows symptoms of revolt. As for me, I don’t think I’ll go with you. I’d rather stay home and see if I can’t get Old Bruden. I have your lordship’s permission to do that, haven’t I? I couldn’t go ahead, you know, without authority.”

“All right,” said Phil, “provided Susan delivers it up in a proper manner. That is the point, you know,—she is to give it up. I don’t want to get the gun in any underhanded way.”

“Exactly,” said Chap. “The laying down of the sword, or rather the hanging up of the gun, is what we are aiming at. You need not be afraid of me. I go in for high-handed—high-minded, I mean—warfare.”

Phil laughed, and, telling Chap to keep a sharp lookout on his own defences, left him alone with his warlike ideas.

Joel had been pretty grum and cross when Philip returned from his ride to town the day before, saying repeatedly that the horse had never

been used in that way since Mr. Berkeley bought him. Phil explained how the thing had happened, but this did not make it appear in any better light in Joel's eyes. Phil left him currying the horse and growling steadily.

Our young friend, therefore, was not surprised this morning when he told Joel that he wanted to ride Jouncer over to the Trumbull Farm, to see a dark cloud spread over that individual's countenance.

"You don't want to take that horse out again, do you?" he asked, sharply.

"Yes," said Philip, "I intend to take him out again. He ought to be used, and I don't propose to let him run away with me this time."

"He'll do it, if he's a mind to," said Joel.

"No, he won't," replied Phil. "I know him better now, and I won't let him get a start on me, as he did yesterday. Uncle left especial directions that I was to take good care of Jouncer, and one way to take care of him is to ride him and not let him get fat and lazy."

"No danger of his gettin' fat," said Joel, "with your style of ridin'."

"Joel," said Phil, his face flushing a little, "I don't want to talk any more about this. I am going to ride Jouncer this morning, and if you don't choose to saddle him I'll do it myself."

"Oh, you're master," said Joel, "and if you say so the thing has got to be done, I s'pose; and if the horse is rode to death, that's your lookout; but I guess I'm responsible for the saddlin' and bridlin' and feedin', ain't I?"

"Certainly," said Phil.

"Then I'll attend to them things myself," remarked Joel, as he went into the stable.

As Philip rode away on Jouncer, he could not make up his mind about Joel. It was true, he had done what he was told to do this time, but whether or not he would continue to obey was a matter of doubt.

But, having been successful in his first skirmish, Philip concluded to be satisfied for the present. Joel was not much of a person, after all.

"Susan," said Chap, about fifteen minutes after Philip had ridden away, "Phil said I might have Old Bruden while he was gone. I've been up to the gun-room, but it isn't there. Do you know where it is?"

"Didn't he tell you where it was?" asked Susan, turning around and facing him squarely.

"I know that he *hoped* it was on its pegs," said Chap.

"Hoped!" exclaimed Susan, derisively. "He may as well give up hoping, as far as that gun is concerned. He knows, and you know, too, that I've got it, and I intend to keep it."

"Susan," said Chap, a' gentle smile spreading over his face like honey over a buckwheat cake, "don't you think you have kept up this little joke about long enough?"

"Little joke!" repeated Susan, her eyes flashing as she spoke. "That boy will find out before I am done that there is no joke about it; and I'll have his elders know, too, that I haven't been in this family for fourteen years to be ruled over now by a boy."

"Phil has been in the family longer than that," said Chap; "he is fifteen."

"Stuff!" said Susan, not seeing any point in this remark. "If Mr. Berkeley had had time to think about things before he went away, he'd 'a' left me in charge of the house. I know he intended me to have charge of it, and he ought to have said so."

"But, Susan," said Chap, "all that hasn't anything to do with the gun. You surely haven't any use for that."

"I've a particular use for it," said Susan.

And off she walked, as she was in the habit of doing when she had said what she had to say, no matter whether the person she was talking to had finished or not.

"I must pull off the woollen sock," said Chap to himself. "Soft stepping won't do with her."

A short time after this he went down into the back-yard, where Susan was sitting under a tree, stringing beans.

“Susan,” said he, sitting down on the grass not far from her, “do you know Mary Gurley? She’s a good cook, isn’t she?”

“She can cook,” said Susan. “All decent women can cook.”

“I mean,” said Chap, “can she make good pies and ginger-snaps and roly-poly puddings, and all that sort of thing?”

“You mean, can she cook for a boy,” said Susan. “Do you want her? I expect she can cook well enough for you.”

“Then she is a mighty good cook,” said Chap. “And do you think she could run a small girl like Jenny?”

“What do you mean?” asked Susan, putting down her beans and looking steadfastly at Chap.

“I mean,” said Chap, in his blandest tones, “that in a day or two Phil is likely to need a new cook and housekeeper, and I think he’ll want one rather given to pies. I’ve heard a good deal about Mary Gurley, and I thought I’d like your opinion of her before I recommend her to Phil.”

“You impudent, outrageous boy!” cried Susan, starting to her feet and letting her pan and beans fall together to the ground. “Do you mean that

Philip Berkeley is thinking of discharging me and getting some one in my place?"

"Oh, yes, Susan," said, Chap, cheerfully. "Phil has been made master of this house, and if you don't obey him he'll have to bounce you. You can see that for yourself."

"Well, just tell him this," said the angry house-keeper, "if you're to be his messenger, that when he pays me the two years' wages that's due me he can talk about discharging me, and not before."

"Oh, of course," said Chap, as he sauntered away, "he'll square up before he tells you to march."

"I got a good point on her," said Chap, while giving an account of his morning's work to Phil, "when she admitted that in one way she could be discharged. But she threw up pretty heavy earth-works when she told about that two years' wages. It must amount to a lot of cash. I wonder how it came to run on so long?"

Phil was furious when he heard what Susan had said. He paid no attention to Chap's remarks, but marched into the dining-room, where the housekeeper was getting the table ready for dinner.

"Susan," he said, "if you don't put that gun back into its place, and obey me in other things, just as you would my uncle, I'll make you leave

this house, and I'll go in town and get the money from Mr. Welford to pay you everything that is owing to you."

Susan was too enraged to answer. She merely sniffed, stiffened her back, and went on with her work.

"Do you feel refreshed?" said Chap, when Phil returned to the porch. "I heard what you said, but don't you think it was something like a breach of contract?"

"Can't help it," said Phil. "She's got to knock under or go."

"Now, look here," said his friend. "You've bared your blade, and that's all right; but just hold your heavy hand for a while, and let me hurl another javelin. You'll do that, won't you?"

"All right," said Phil. "I'll wait a couple of days."

"Phil," said Chap, that evening, after supper, "will you lend me one of these canes in the rack?"

"They are all uncle's canes," said Phil, who was reading by the lamp which stood on the hall table; "but he'd lend you one, of course. What are you going to do with it?"

"Oh, I'm just going to take a little walk," said Chap, selecting the heaviest and knottiest stick in the rack. "I'm tired of the kind of strategic warfare I've been carrying on to-day, and I'd like to

change to something straight out and simple. Perhaps the man with the black straw hat may be coming to-night on one of his nocturnal prowls; and if he does, I'd like to meet him by moonlight alone."

" You needn't expect him," said Phil, laughing. " Everybody knows now that uncle isn't at home."

It so happened that the man with the black straw hat was walking that evening towards Hyson Hall.

He had seen the notice at the post-office, had gone to Mr. McNeal's store, and had recovered his hat. He had asked who brought it there, and when told it was Phil he made up his mind that perhaps that boy was old enough to talk to; and, as no one knew when Mr. Berkeley would be at home, he might as well go and have a little conversation with his nephew.



CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH A STORY IS TOLD.

THE moon had risen quite high by the time the man with the black straw hat had entered the grounds of Hyson Hall, but the roadway near the house was overshadowed by large trees, making the light very dim and uncertain.

As the man walked up this dusky avenue, he was revolving in his mind various ways of opening his intended interview with Phil. He did not care to explain his business to a boy, and in fact it was only with Mr. Godfrey Berkeley that he could take any decisive steps in the matter, but he thought it was of no use for him to stay any longer in that part of the country, unless he could find out something in regard to the business on which he came.

He had heard that Phil was a very sensible, straightforward fellow, who frequently did business

for his uncle. Such a boy could certainly give him some points which would be of service in the future.

The revolutions in the man's mind, as well as his onward progress, were suddenly arrested by the appearance of a tall person, who stepped out from behind a tree, and who, holding a large stick in front of him in his right hand, cried, peremptorily,—

“Halt!”

The man halted as promptly as if he had run against a fence.

Chap stood squarely up before him, his legs spread out a little, and his knotty stick resting carelessly on his left arm.

“Well,” said he, “here you are again.”

When Chap spoke, the man knew him to be a boy, and supposed him to be Phil, of whom he had not taken any particular notice on the evening he saw him.

“Yes,” he answered, “I am here again. How are you to-night?”

“Now, look here!” said Chap. “I rather suspected you'd be along again, and I came out to have a word with you. I want you to understand one thing. This is a free and open country, and when a man has anything to say he ought to come out boldly and say it in broad daylight, and not glide in under cover of the night.”

The man was about to speak here, but Chap did not allow himself to be interrupted, and went on,—

“As I said before, this is a free country, and if a person has anything to say, he has a right to be heard. Now, have you anything to say? If so, I am ready to hear it. There’s no need of any mystery, or darkness, or unusual clothes. All you have to do is to stand right up and speak out.”

The man did not like Chap’s manner at all, but he was a prudent person, and had taken a long walk in order to get some information that might be of advantage to him, so he resolved not to get angry, and answered, very politely,—

“Yes, there are some things I’d like to speak to you about.”

“All right,” said Chap; “just step with me a little farther down the road, so as to be out of ear-shot of the house, and then you can unload your mind.”

“That suits me,” said the man, with a smile, “but it does not agree with what you just now said about having everything free and open, you know.”

“Oh, what I meant,” said Chap, “was that a person should be free and open to the one he is talking to. There is no use shouting private affairs into servants’ ears, and having them tooted all over the country through a horn.”

The man smiled, but made no answer. He followed his companion down the roadway, thinking that this Philip Berkeley was certainly a very curious fellow.

Pausing at a wooden bench, between two trees, Chap remarked,—

“We can sit down here, and if you notice any listeners, just you give a low whistle, and I’ll pounce on them with this club. I’ll keep a lookout, too. Now you can begin to unveil your secret mission. My friend Phil has commissioned me to attend to you and find out the meaning of your nocturnal errands to this place.”

“You don’t mean to say,” said the man, in surprise, “that you are not young Philip Berkeley?”

“I mean to say that very thing,” replied Chap. “But you can tell your secret just as freely to me as to him. I am Chapman Webster, his particular friend. He’s pretty heavily loaded down with responsibilities and bothers just now, and I’m taking part of them off his shoulders.”

“And I suppose my affairs fall to your share,” said the man.

“Yes,” replied Chap, “we divided things up, and I took you. I have the greatest fancy for working out hidden clues, and all that sort of thing. It’s something connected with the Berkeley family you came about, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said the other, “it is.”

“Well, then,” said Chap, “just begin at the very beginning of your story, and tell it straight through; and don’t leave out any of the points. I’m just the fellow to help you straighten out things, if you’ve got them a little crooked.”

The man reflected a few moments. He had nothing on earth to say to Chap Webster; and yet he thought this boy might be as able to answer the few questions he wished to put as Philip Berkeley would be, and it was likely that he would be much more willing to do so. But Chap had evidently prepared himself for some business of thrilling interest, and it would not do to put him off with a few apparently unimportant remarks.

The man took off his black straw hat, looked at it, then put it on again. Then he began:

“About the close of the war of 1812——”

“By Jupiter!” cried Chap. “Was it about a ship?”

“Yes,” said the other, “it was a ship.”

“You don’t mean this river?” asked Chap, getting very much excited.

“Yes, I do,” said the man, “this very river. Perhaps you know the story yourself?”

“No, I don’t,” said the boy. “At least, only part of it. All I know is that a British ship was

chased up this river, and ran aground right down there on this bank ; and that all the people on board got ashore, and scattered, nobody knows where ; and that there's a lot of treasure on board of her,—at least, there's every reason to believe there is,—and that nobody has ever come to claim it or dig it up."

"Yes, that is the very ship," said the man. "I see you are pretty good in following out a clue."

"I've practised it," said Chap, with much satisfaction. "There's nothing like practice in these things."

"But perhaps you did not know," said the other, "that there were three brothers on board."

"No, I did not know that," said Chap.

"Well, there were," continued the man. "They came over from England to found a family. You know that each of our distinguished families were founded by three brothers, who came over from England."

"Yes," said Chap, "I've heard that ; but they generally came over sooner,—in the last century, anyway."

"Yes," said his companion, "but these three brothers couldn't come any sooner. They weren't born early enough, for one thing, and there were other reasons for delay. But they came as soon

as they could, and they brought with them all the wealth they possessed."

"And did they scuttle out of that ship and leave it there?" cried Chap.

"You must have heard this story before," said the man.

"Never," replied Chap. "But now tell me one thing. Was one of these brothers the ancestor of this Berkeley family?"

"Certainly he was; and not very far removed, either."

"Why, just think of it!" cried Chap. "That treasure, or part of it, which we have been talking about so much, actually belongs to the Berkeleys. Why, I sometimes used to think that if we got it out, the British crown or our government might claim it. But here it is really the property of Phil and his uncle. This is the most splendid thing I ever heard of! And isn't it strange, too, that the ship should have run ashore on the very land the Berkeleys were afterwards to own?"

"Perhaps," said the man, in a half-whisper, "the land was bought because the ship was known to be there."

"Look here," cried Chap, springing to his feet, "if you can get some dynamite and an electric battery, I'll go into this thing with you, and we'll get that money. We won't wait for anybody else.

Phil doesn't warm up a bit about it,—though I don't mind his coming in if he'll take hold lively,—and there's no knowing when his uncle is coming back. I don't want anything but the fun for my share, but I know the family will be willing to pay you well for your secret."

The man smiled.

"We must not be too hasty," he said. "I shall be willing to do nothing in this matter without the co-operation of the family."

"You mean you want to wait till Mr. Godfrey Berkeley comes back?" said Chap.

"Yes, I mean that," replied the other. "You are acquainted with Mr. Berkeley, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said Chap, "I know him very well. He's a tip-top fellow."

"He is of a free and generous disposition, isn't he?" asked the man.

"Yes, indeed!" replied Chap; "our folks say too much so."

"He must possess a handsome property," said the other.

"I expect he's as rich as blazes," replied Chap. "At any rate, he buys everything he wants."

"And yet I suppose he'd like to make more money," said the man.

"Oh, yes," said Chap; "I know he's all the time trying to make more money with improved

stock and lots of other things which a good many people laugh at. And I can tell you this, if he knew there was treasure belonging to him in that old wreck, he'd just spend any amount of money to get it out."

"Now, then, Mr. Webster," said the man, rising, "we know each other. Do not reveal what I have told you, and when the proper moment arrives, count on me. In the mean time, I have one thing to ask of you. As soon as Mr. Berkeley arrives, let me know of it. Here is a postal-card with my name and address on it. All you have to do is to write on the other side the words, 'He has come,' and then mail it. Will you do this?"

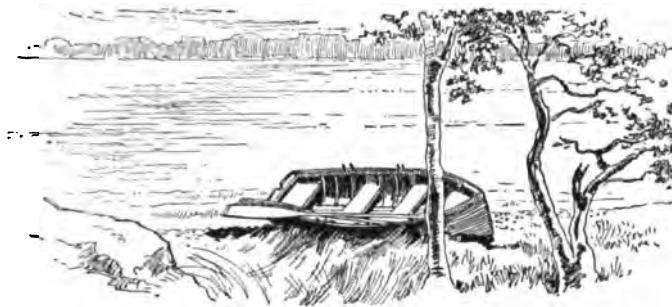
"Certainly I will," said Chap, putting the card in his pocket.

"Now we understand each other perfectly?" said the man with the black straw hat, extending his hand.

"Perfectly," said Chap, giving the hand a vigorous shake.

"Now good-by for the present!" said the other.

And he walked rapidly away.



CHAPTER XI.

PHILIP IS BROUGHT TO A HALT.

CHAP's bosom was now filled with a tremendous secret. Phil and the other fellows might laugh as much as they pleased when he talked about the treasure on the sunken vessel.

Now, he *knew* something about it, and could afford to let them sneer. The man with the black straw hat would probably depart from Boontown as soon as possible, and then he, Chap, would be the only person in that part of the country who had any positive knowledge on the subject of the wreck.

He would have been glad to tell Phil all that he had heard, but his promise to the man—which, perhaps, he had made without proper consideration—prevented this.

He found Phil asleep when he went into the house, and, as his friend asked him no questions

in regard to his walk, Chap did not consider it necessary to say anything about it; and Phil went to bed without knowing that the man with the black straw hat had been there at all.

Chap lay awake for some time, thinking about his exciting interview and trying to make up his mind as to the extent and meaning of his promise to the man; and he finally concluded that, while he could not tell Philip, nor any one else, about the three brothers and the Berkeley claim to the sunken treasure, he had promised nothing that would prevent his going to work as soon as possible to look for the submerged gold.

This was the thing he had intended to do all along, before he knew that there existed a man with a black straw hat. Of course, the recovered property could not be divided, and things could not be definitely settled before Mr. Berkeley came back; but there was nothing to prevent Phil and himself from making a beginning in the good work.

If they could only get out a few boxes of silver coin, that would help wonderfully in carrying out the rest of the enterprise. He went to sleep, so to speak, with his mind full of exploding cartridges and flying mud.

The next day Phil rode into town to see Mr. Welford again. He did not know what means

Chap was going to take in order to bring Susan to terms, but he had no faith whatever in his friend's success, and determined that he must make arrangements to pay the housekeeper her wages and discharge her, in case she continued to rebel against his authority.

He had looked over his uncle's books, and had found that two years' wages were really due to Susan. She had probably wished Mr. Berkeley to act as her banker, and keep her money for her.

Phil rode to town on Jouncer, Joel making no objection this time, for the horse had been brought back in excellent condition from the trip to Trumbull's.

But, although the day was a pleasant one, and the horse went well, Phil did not enjoy his ride. He did not at all fancy the idea of his uncle's coming home and finding his old servant discharged.

On the other hand, the teachings of Godfrey Berkeley had made Phil feel that his uncle would think very ill of him if he allowed himself to be set at defiance and treated with contempt by a servant who owed him obedience and respect. The thing had to be done, but Phil hated to do it.

Mr. Welford was surprised and angry when he heard Phil's errand.

"Three hundred dollars!" he exclaimed. "Cer-

tainly there is not that much owing to the house-keeper! And discharge her! Why, you must be crazy! How can you think of doing such things in your uncle's absence?"

Phil then explained, at full, his provocations. Mr. Welford listened sternly.

"I don't know what you have been doing," he said, "to make her act in that way. I have always heard of her as a very faithful servant, not only to your uncle, but to your grandfather."

A thought passed through Mr. Welford's mind, but as he looked at Phil's clear eye and honest countenance he refrained from expressing it. Three hundred dollars to pay a servant seemed an absurdity, but what else could the boy want with the money?

"There is no use talking any more about it," said Mr. Welford. "I can furnish you with no such sum as that. I have now in my hands very little money belonging to your uncle. By his directions, I paid, a few days ago, a large sum on his account, and I certainly expected to have seen him before this time in regard to that and other matters. As it is, I not only have not three hundred dollars belonging to him, but his balance here is very small, scarcely enough, I imagine, to keep you and Hyson Hall going for a couple of weeks longer. I have no doubt, however, that your uncle will be

back before that time expires. I advise you now to go home, and get along with the housekeeper as well as you can. If you are pleasant to her, perhaps she will be pleasant to you. And don't try to do any great deeds in your uncle's absence. I see you are not afraid to bring your horse round to the front this time," he said, with a grim smile, as Phil opened the door.

If Mr. Welford had been a boy, there would have been a fight, then and there; but he was an elderly, respectable gentleman, and Phil answered him not a word. He merely bowed, mounted his horse and rode away, the most rueful boy in all that county.

The next day was Sunday, and Phil and Chap walked over to the Webster farm, and went to church with the family. The boys returned there to dinner, but Phil insisted that Chap should go home with him in the afternoon and continue his visit, for he declared that Hyson Hall was too doleful a place for him to live in alone.

Helen, Chap's sister, somewhat younger, and a great deal better looking than he, privately told her brother that she thought that Phil must find the management of affairs at Hyson Hall a dreadful worry, for she never saw him look so blue and moping.

"You're right, my girl," said Chap. "The

domestic horizon over there is pretty cloudy, and there's what the papers would call a crisis impending; but I'm Phil's prime minister, and it's my opinion that the government party will be found firmly established when the crisis is over."

"Now, Chap," said Helen, taking her brother by the hand, "don't you go and lead Phil into any wild tantrums."

"Tantrums!" exclaimed Chap, impatiently. "I'd like to know why people always think about tantrums and such things when they talk to me. I've got nothing to do with tantrums. Why, Helen, I'm helping Phil to carry out one of the most important pieces of work that anybody ever undertook in this part of the country."

"But, Chap," said Helen, "that is just the kind of thing I am afraid of."

"Now, Helen," said Chap, "if I could tell you all about these affairs—which I can't do, of course, without Phil's permission—you'd see that I know what I'm about, and that I'm trying to do at least two most excellent things. You mustn't talk, my dear sister, about matters you don't understand."

Then Chap kissed his sister, and hurried on to join Phil, who had started for home.

The previous day, while Phil was away, Chap had been down to the river, and had made as careful an examination as was possible, under the cir-

cumstances, of the position of the portion of the wreck which he could see,—which, at that time, happened to be very little,—and from this he endeavored to get an idea of the probable position of that part of the vessel which he couldn't see at all.

He had pretty well satisfied himself in regard to the matter; and, on Monday morning, as he sat with Phil on the porch, after breakfast, he laid before his friend a plan he had mentally worked out for the recovery of the treasure.

“ You see, Phil,” he said, “ there's no use fooling any more. The gold is there, and we ought to get it. From what you told me Mr. Welford said, I should think a little cash would be a pretty handy thing just now; though, of course, the great bulk of it should be kept in the bank vaults until your uncle comes back.”

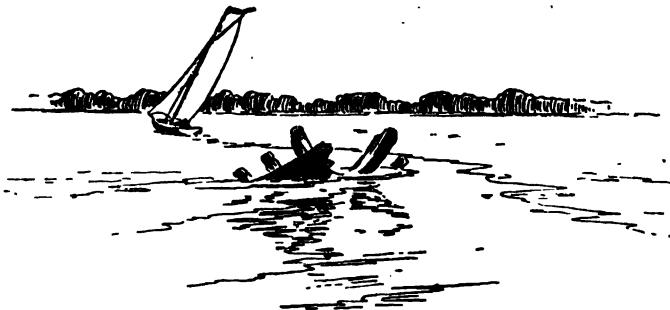
Phil listened with a dull sort of interest. He had been wondering if Chap had entirely given up the endeavor to bring Susan to terms. The time he had allowed him had elapsed; but his lively friend was so engrossed with the wrecking business that he appeared to have forgotten all about his proposed domestic diplomacy.

Phil was sorry to see this, and intended to say something on the subject, for he felt, with a good deal of wounded pride, that it was now impossible

for him to carry out his declared determination to discharge Susan.

He was about to change the subject from wrecks to housekeepers, when a carriage came slowly driving up the shaded road towards the house.

The boys immediately recognized the vehicle as one of the old rattle-trap concerns belonging to the livery stable in the town.



CHAPTER XII.

EMILE TOURON.

THE carriage which was approaching came slowly, although the driver, a negro boy, continually belabored his horse with a short whip, endeavoring, besides, by a vigorous clicking and jerking of the reins, to make him go faster; but the horse had evidently made up his mind that in regard to this sort of thing a line must be drawn somewhere, and he drew it at a slow trot, as being the fastest pace that should be expected of his old bones and stiff muscles.

“Who in the world can be coming here?” cried Phil, jumping up from his seat. “It can’t be uncle!”

But the moment the boys got a good look at the carriage, they perceived that the individual on the back seat was not Mr. Godfrey Berkeley. It was a young person, apparently a boy.

When the carriage reached the front of the house, Phil went down the steps to receive the visitor.

This person was already working at the crooked handle of the carriage door, and, having at last succeeded in turning it, he quickly got out.

He was a well-dressed young fellow, scarcely as tall as Phil, but apparently two or three years older. He had dark hair and eyes, and a very small moustache, which, though not noticeable at a distance, was quite distinct when one stood near and looked him full in the face. This young person stepped up quickly to Phil and held out his hand.

“Is this my Cousin Phileep?” he asked, with a smile.

“I am Philip Berkeley,” said our friend, taking the hand of his visitor, and looking very much bewildered.

“Zen you are my cousin, for I am Emile Touron. You know me now?”

Phil did not know him from Adam, but he was saved any embarrassment on this point by the visitor turning to the carriage to help the boy pull out a small trunk, which was stowed away in the front of the vehicle.

The driver was paid, and drove away, and Phil then took hold of one handle of the trunk to assist his visitor in carrying it up the steps.



“One moment,” said his new-found cousin. “Let me gaze upon zis charming house—zese lovely plains!” And he looked over the lawn and the pasture-field with a glistening eye, and then stepped backward to gaze upon the house. “Ah, ze bells! ze bells!” he cried. “Where are ze bells,—zose lovely bells which did dingle-dangle all ze time, ‘Come to dinner! Dinner ready! Hurry up!’ I was a boy when I heard zose lovely bells, and I did zink zey dingled in Shinese. But it was all ze same to me. Where are zey now? Haf zey blown away?”

“I never saw them at all,” said Phil. “My uncle took them down before I came here. He did not like them.”

The face of Monsieur Emile assumed a shocked expression.

“Not like zose bells,” he exclaimed,—“zose angel bells! I say no more!”

And taking hold of one handle of the trunk, he and Phil carried it up the steps.

Chap, who had been gazing in silent wonderment at the visitor, was now introduced to him. Emile Touron shook hands with the tall boy, but apparently took little interest in him, and suggested to Phil, as they passed into the hall, that as they now had hold of the trunk they might as well carry it up into the room he was to occupy.

Phil's mind was not prepared for such prompt action, but he was a quick thinker, and of a polite and hospitable nature.

He asked to be excused a moment, and ran out into the porch and very soon arranged with Chap that he should move into Phil's room and let the visitor have the one he occupied.

No further preparations being necessary, the new-comer was put into possession of Chap's bed-chamber, while the big valise and small amount of clothing belonging to Master Webster were carried into Phil's room.

Monsieur Emile desired to make some change in his toilet, and Phil left him to himself. He found Chap in the hall, eager to know all about this newly arrived cousin.

"All I know about him," said Phil, "is that my aunt married a Frenchman named Touron, but I always thought she had no children."

"And if she had had any," said Chap, "they wouldn't have been French ones."

"That's very true," said Phil; "at least, not so French as this fellow. They would always have lived in America. And, besides, he is too old to be my aunt's son. I remember when she was married. I was a little chap, but I heard it talked about."

"Then it's all plain enough," said Chap. "Your

French uncle was married twice, and this is one of the original children."

"You are right, no doubt," said Phil; "but that doesn't make him much of a cousin, does it?"

"He seems to be quite at home, for all that," said Chap.

"I have often heard," said Phil, "that my aunt and her husband spent a good deal of time here while my grandfather was alive, and I suppose this boy was with them."

"That's it, I guess," said Chap; "but I don't remember him. I didn't come here much in those days." After a pause, he continued: "Now that you've got your cousin here, I don't suppose you want me. Things look as if he were going to make a good deal of a stay."

"Now, look here, Chap," said Phil, earnestly. "I don't want any of your nonsense. Just you hang on where you are. It's as likely as not I'll need you more than ever. I don't wonder this French fellow wanted to come and stay awhile with us, for if he has been here before he must know that it's a tip-top place in summer. If he'd come when uncle was here, it would have been all right. But why everything should turn up just now I can't imagine."

"Don't worry about me," said Chap. "I'll hang on."

At this moment Susan appeared at the door. She had not spoken to Phil since he threatened to dismiss her; but now she saw fit to break the silence.

"Is that young man going to stay here?" she asked.

"I suppose he'll stay some time," answered Phil. "He brought a trunk."

"Well, then," said the housekeeper, "if you are going to pay me off and discharge me, you might as well do it now, before this house gets filled up with boys."

"I am not going to pay you off and discharge you, Susan," said Phil, coloring a little, "for I find I can't do it, and I think it will be a great deal better, Susan, if you'd take hold and pull along squarely with me, as uncle intended."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Susan.

And, with a little toss of her head, she walked off.

It did not take long for Phil to get acquainted with Emile Touron, for the young Frenchman made himself very much at home at Hyson Hall. He took the greatest interest in the place, went all over the house and farm, visited the stables and barn, and asked a great many questions, some of which Phil did not like, as they concerned the price and value of various things on the farm.

It was evident that Emile was a very sharp-witted and practical youth. His knowledge frequently surprised Phil and Chap; and when he met with anything he did not understand he was not satisfied until he found out all that he could about it.

But his manner to Chap was not always pleasant, and he once asked Phil how long "zis Shap" was going to stay.

"For a long time, I hope," said Phil, quickly.
"He is my best friend."

And the subject was dropped.

Chap did not like the French boy at all. He generally called him "Emily," in speaking of him, though Phil would not allow him to do so to his face.

"He has got a girl's name," said Chap, "and we might as well give it to him squarely in English."

Not only was Emile personally disagreeable to Chap, but he interfered with his plans. Chap wanted very much to go to work on the wreck, and if he did so now he must either conceal the undertaking from the French boy or let him have part in it.

The first was evidently impossible, and there were many objections to the second. The greatest of these was that Emile would lay claim to a portion of the recovered treasure.

"But he hasn't any right to it," said Chap, when talking of the matter to Phil, who had at last consented to go into the wrecking business, although he had not been told the story of the three brothers. "A fellow can't inherit through his father, and then around to his step-mother, and back to her ancestors, can he?"

Phil agreed that this could not be done, and it was finally concluded to tell Emile about the wreck, and to let him join in the preliminary operations. It was also agreed that Phœnix Poole should be taken into partnership.

Phœnix was quiet, but he was a good, square fellow, and did not have much chance for fun. Work was rather slack at the Poole farm just then, and he could occasionally have an opportunity to get away. It would be a mean thing, both boys agreed, not to let Phœnix in.

When Emile was told the story of the wreck and the sunken treasure, he treated it with incredulity, and even scorn.

Phil did not care whether he believed it or not, but Chap was very much annoyed that any one should doubt a thing so self-evident as this, in which he took so great an interest. In his zeal to convince the French boy he told him much more than he should have done, considering his compact with the man with the black straw hat; but

Emile shook his head and sneered at the whole affair.

Notwithstanding this, however, he made one of a party of four boys who went down to the river, one warm morning, to make a practical survey of the position of the wreck, especially that part of it which was entirely submerged.

A large, flat scow was poled out into the river, and anchored over the spot where Chap had calculated that the stern of the vessel must lie.

The boys were all good swimmers, and the preliminary observations were to be made by diving. Emile did not undress, but sat in the scow and watched the other boys.

Half a dozen times each of the three swimmers stood up on the side of the scow, and plunged to the bottom of the river, but each time they came up with the report that they could discover nothing but mud and mussel-shells.

Phil had just declared that they might as well give up the diving business, for that day, at any rate, when, to the surprise of the other boys, Emile began to get ready to go into the water.

“It’s no use to dive for ze sunken ship,” he said, “but it is so hot I must take one little swim.”

It was evident he was an experienced swimmer, for he made a splendid dive. He sprang as far from the scow as he could, and went down in a

slanting direction from it. He stayed under a long time,—so long, indeed, that the other boys began to get a little troubled.

“I don’t care much for Emily,” said Chap, “but I should hate to have him stick fast in the mud and be drowned.”

When the French boy came up he was more than forty feet from the scow, and he puffed at a great rate as he swam to its side.

“Now, zen,” said he, “we haf all had enough of ze dive. Zis is one horrid river. You stick fast some day, and never come up, if you don’t take care.”

No one seemed inclined to differ from this opinion; but Phœnix now appeared on the side of the scow, ready for another dive.

“Don’t you do zat!” cried Emile. “It is but vile folly to swim here. Don’t I tell you you be drowned?”

“All right!” said Phœnix; and in he went.

Like Emile, he sprang far from the scow, and went down in a slanting direction. He did not stay down as long as the French boy, and he came up much nearer the scow.

“Now, zen,” said Emile, as Phœnix clambered on board, “I hope you is satisfied.”

“Enough for to-day,” said Phœnix.

When the boys reached the house, Emile went up-stairs to his room.

As soon as he had disappeared, Phœnix took Phil and Chap a little way down the road.

“Look here,” he said, in a low voice, although there was nobody near, “when I dived that last time I found something.”

“What?” asked Chap and Phil together.

“The side of a big ship,” said Phœnix.



CHAPTER XIII.

OLD BRUDEN FINDS HIS MASTER.

THE assertions of Phœnix in regard to the side of a ship which he had found when he made his last dive from the scow were very positive.

“I had an idea,” he said, “that Frenchman was studying out something. I knew he didn’t dive in and swim ever so far under water for nothing, and when he came out he wanted us all to go home as fast as we could. That looked like a trick, and I thought I’d just dive in and see what he had been after; and as sure as I’m born, there is a side of a ship down there! I swam right up to it, and it’s straight up and down like the wall of a house. As I came up I put my foot against it, and pushed off towards the scow.”

This report filled Chap with joy, which was somewhat dampened by the thought that Emile had also found the sunken ship.

"But we needn't trouble ourselves about that," said Phil; "he can't dig it up."

"But he thinks he can," said Chap. "If he didn't he wouldn't have kept so quiet about it; giving us good advice about being drowned; trying to pull wool over our eyes,—the bull-frog!"

The boys were of the opinion that the wreck must have parted somewhere about the middle, and that the stern, or after-portion, which extended out into deep water, had been gradually forced by the heavy spring tides a short distance farther down the river.

It was agreed that surveys and examinations should be made as soon as they could do so without the company of the French boy.

"I'm going to keep an eye on him," said Chap, "to see that he don't do anything on his own account. It would be just like him to get a lot of nitro-glycerine and an electric battery and blow the whole thing up without letting us know anything about it."

"I guess we'd know it when she blew up," said Phil, "and then we could go down and rake up the golden guineas that would be scattered along the shore."

"You are always making fun," said Chap. "Now, I am in earnest about this thing!"

"You'll find me in earnest, too," said Phil, "if the time ever comes to do anything."

The Webster family now considered it proper for Chap's visit at Hyson Hall to come to an end, but there was no objection to his spending as much of his vacation time there as he chose, provided he came home to eat and sleep.

This interfered somewhat with his intended watch over Emile, but in spite of obstacles he kept a constant eye, if not upon the French boy, at least upon the scene of his expected operations.

Very often, when he was at home, Chap would go out on the porch, and with a long spy-glass carefully scan the river-shore in the vicinity of the wreck.

Phil's mind was too full of other things to allow him to give much thought to the sunken ship, although he would have been delighted to have a pile of golden guineas just at this time. He had thought at first that it would be a capital thing to be, for a time, the master of Hyson Hall, but now he was heartily sick of it, and wished most earnestly that his uncle would come home and relieve him of his anxieties and responsibilities.

Sometimes he began to think his uncle had not done right in going off in this peculiar way, and leaving his money affairs in such a bad condition. But Phil quickly put such ideas from his mind.

He had always known his uncle as an honorable man, and if he left but little money behind him, it was because he had forgotten the large claim which Mr. Welford said he had paid out of the funds in his hands.

But money affairs were not the only things which troubled Phil. Day by day Emile Touron made himself more disagreeable. He pried into everything that was going on, even spending a good deal of time with Joel, endeavoring to find out from him everything he could in regard to the probable value of the little wheat crop, which was nearly ready to be harvested. But Joel had taken a dislike to the youth, and gave him very little satisfaction, vexing him besides by his non-committal answers.

"What will be planted in zat field," asked Emile of Phil, one afternoon, "when ze wheat is gone?"

"We shan't plant anything," said Phil; "we'll let it come up in grass."

"No more grass is wanted," said Emile.

At first Phil was inclined to make no answer to this remark, but as the French boy continued to talk on the subject, Phil told him that it was intended, in the fall, to plough up the pasture-field by the river and to put that in wheat for the next season.

"Plough up zat beautiful plain!" cried Emile.
"It zall never be done."

"What have you got to say about it?" cried Phil, turning angrily upon him. "You talk too much about things on this place!"

"I will talk more when it is mine," said Emile, with a little grin.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Phil.

"What do I mean?" said Emile, turning around and staring fixedly at Phil. "What I mean is zis. Just you listen and you will hear what I mean! Before you know it, zis place will belong to my father, which is ze same zing as mine. Before ze old man Berkeley died, and your good uncle was spending ever so much, and getting nothing, he borrowed, and borrowed, and borrowed money from my father; and when he came here, and had all this property, he was to pay it; but he wait, and wait, and he never pays it. And now my father he hears zat Mr. Godfrey is gone away, nobody knows where, and everybody zinks he will never come back——"

"That is a lie!" cried Phil. "His friends all know he will come back."

"My father does not know it. He says he will never come back, and he sends me here to see, and I say he will never come back. We have a mortgage on zis place, and we will have it sold,

THE YOUNG MASTER OF HYSON HALL 115

and we zall buy it, and zall come here to live. And zose bells—zose angel bells—zall be put once more upon ze roof to dingle-dangle in ze wind. What do you zink of zat, Master Pheel?"

"I don't believe one word of it!" cried Phil.

"You will believe it soon enough," said Emile.

And turning away, he went up-stairs, leaving poor Phil in a state of excited misery.

In spite of his effort to convince himself that what the French boy had told him was merely an invention to annoy him, he could not help believing that the story was true.

He now saw the meaning of Emile's interest in the place. He had been sent here to find out about everything, because he and his father expected to own everything. And he, Phil, could do nothing. If his uncle would only come back, and come quickly!

While our young friend was walking up and down the hall, torturing his mind with thoughts of the great impending evil, Emile came down the stairway. Phil did not speak to him, nor did he pay any attention to him till he reached the front door, then, to his utter amazement, he perceived that Emile carried Old Bruden under his arm. In an instant Phil sprang towards him.

"What are you doing with that gun?" he said.

"I am going to zoot two little birds," said

Emile, quietly. "It is a long time since I haf zoots ze little birds. Ze gun was loaded already, but I put on two—what you call zem?—caps."

"Put down that gun!" roared Phil. "You shall not use it! How did you dare to take it?"

At this moment Susan appeared in the hall.

"Susan, did you give him that gun?" cried Phil.

"No, I didn't!" exclaimed Susan, who was evidently in a state of high excitement. "He sneaked into my room and took it. That's the way he got it! Catch me giving it to him! He has been prying all over the house, and he saw it there."

"Put that gun down instantly!" said Phil, stepping close to Emile.

The latter fell back a little.

"Very well," said he, "I will do zat," and walking deliberately to a corner of the hall, he stood the gun carefully against the wall. "Now, zen," said he, returning to Phil, "let me say somezing. All zat is in zis house is ze same zing as mine. If I want to use a gun, or any ozer zing, I use it; but if you had been amiable, I would haf been amiable. But you choose your own way. Now, zen, I say to you, Zere is zat gun. Let me see you dare to touch it!"

In an instant Phil sprang towards the gun, but



He seemed intent upon pushing his antagonist backward

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before he reached it, Emile seized him by the shoulder and rudely pulled him back. Phil turned savagely, but before he could strike the French boy the latter clinched him, and a violent struggle ensued.

Jenny had now arrived on the scene, and she and Susan stood back, almost dumb with terror.

“Where is Joel?” gasped Susan.

“He has gone to the woods,” replied Jenny, with tears in her eyes.

Emile was taller and stronger than Phil, and in a contest of this kind he had greatly the advantage. His method of fighting was very peculiar. He seemed intent upon pushing his antagonist backward and jamming him against chairs and the corners of tables.

Two or three times it looked as if Phil’s back would be broken, but he always managed to twist himself out of his awkward positions.

At last Emile thrust him violently away from him and sent him staggering backward across the hall. At that moment Susan rushed forward. Snatching Old Bruden from the corner where it stood, she ran to Phil and put the gun in his hand.

“Here,” she cried, “take it and kill him!”

Phil mechanically took the gun, but he did not raise it nor try to carry out Susan’s blood-thirsty

instructions. Emile, however, thought he was going to be shot.

Turning pale, he hesitated for a moment, and then dashed up-stairs, where he rushed into his room and slammed the door after him.

“There, now,” said Susan, as Philip stood, still panting, and holding Old Bruden in his hands, “just you keep that gun and be master of this house!”



CHAPTER XIV.

PHœNIX SEES HIS DUTY AND DOES IT.

STRANGE to say, Phil felt at this moment as if he were the real master of the house. Ten minutes before he would have supposed that such a feeling would never come to him again.

He looked down at the gun, he looked at Susan, and then he looked at the stairway, up which Emile had fled. He did not say anything, and Susan stood silent. As for Jenny, she retired into the dining-room, where, through the open door, she watched the scene.

Raising the hammers of the gun, Phil took off the caps, which he put into his vest-pocket; then, carefully letting down the hammers again, he handed Old Bruden to the housekeeper.

“Susan,” said he, “will you take this gun and hang it up in the gun-room? And I would like you to lock the door and bring me the key.”

"I'll do it," said Susan, promptly; "and if you'll wait here, I'll bring you the key in a minute."

"Knocked under," said Jenny, softly, to herself. "I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen it!"

When Susan came down-stairs and put the gun-room key into Phil's hands, he received it with a feeling of positive exaltation. One of his great troubles was at an end. Putting on his hat, he walked cheerfully down to the stables. For a time, the effect of the French boy's story and threat had passed from his mind.

As soon as Phil was well out of the house, Emile came cautiously down-stairs. Seizing his hat from the rack, he clapped it on, went out and walked down the shaded roadway.

He was very angry, not only with everybody around him, but with himself. He had suffered himself, in a measure, to be beaten, and had run away.

Nothing could more thoroughly exasperate a person of his nature than to think that he had done a thing like this. He walked on for some distance, storming inwardly and occasionally shaking his fist, until, when he had nearly reached the outer gate, he saw Phœnix Poole approaching.

Phœnix had come, by appointment with Chap,

to talk over plans in regard to the wreck, but Chap, that afternoon, had been detained at home.

The sight of Phœnix still further enraged Emile. He was the boy who had suspected the motive of his single dive from the scow, and had tried to find out what he had been doing under water.

“What do you want here?” cried Emile, as soon as he came within speaking distance of the other.

“What’s that to you?” asked Phœnix, a little surprised.

“You go home!” cried Emile. “Nobody wants you here.”

“I won’t go home till I’m ready,” said Phœnix.

“Zen you be ready now!” cried the excited French boy. “What you come here for, anyhow, you little schneak?”

Phœnix turned around and walked to the side of the road. He took off his hat and coat and laid them on the grass. Then he came back to Emile and gave him a tremendous thrashing.

It was of no use for the French boy to struggle or resist. Phœnix Poole was the strongest boy in that part of the country, and he did not stop till he felt that his work was thoroughly done. Then he put on his hat and coat and walked up to the house.

In all his life Emile had never been thoroughly thrashed before, and, among his other sensations, that of astonishment was very strong. How such a little fellow could whip him he could not understand. But, although Phœnix was short, he was not little. Emile had never taken enough interest in him to notice how thick-set and muscular he was.

The French boy, who but a short time ago had felt and acted as the master of Hyson Hall, was now so thoroughly cowed that he was afraid to go back to the house. He was just as angry at everybody as he had been before, but even his temper could not give him courage enough to meet that horrible short boy again.

Phœnix did not find Philip in the house, so he went down to the stables.

“Chap has not been here yet?” said he.

“No,” said Phil. “He isn’t keeping as good a watch over his Emily as he used to. If he isn’t careful, that wreck will be blown up before he knows it.”

After a short silence, in which he occupied himself examining the points of Jouncer, who was being rubbed down by Joel, Phœnix remarked,—

“I met that French boy as I was coming here.”

“You did?” said Phil, who did not consider this statement of any importance.

“Yes,” continued Phœnix, “and I licked him.”

At these words Phil turned round in utter amazement; Joel stopped his work, and even Jouncer turned his head, as if to listen to what was coming next.

Phœnix was such a very quiet, peaceable boy that no one ever thought of his engaging in a fight. This was certainly something very extraordinary.

“What in the world put you up to that?” cried Phil. “Did he give you any of his impudence?”

“Well,” said Phœnix, slowly, “he did rub my hair up the wrong way.”

“He must have rubbed pretty hard,” said Phil, laughing, “to make you fight him.”

“It wasn’t altogether what he said,” remarked Phœnix; “but from what I had seen of him, and from what you and Chap told me, I considered it a sort of duty to lay him out.”

Joel burst out laughing at this, and went to work with great vigor upon Jouncer, while Phœnix, a little confused, put his hands in his pockets, and said he guessed he’d look round and see if Chap was coming.

Chap did arrive soon, and the three boys went to the shady front porch to talk over matters.

When Chap heard what had happened to Emile he fairly danced with glee, and he gave Phœnix

no rest until he had told the story with great minuteness.

Phil had made up his mind that he would tell Chap of the new trouble which threatened him, and he now concluded to take Phoenix also into his confidence. A fellow who had done what he had deserved to know all that was going on.

The dreadful revelation of the real object of Emile Touron's visit, and the mortgage held by his father, took all the cheerfulness out of Chap, and made Phoenix look blank indeed.

At first the boys did not believe the story, but Phil was certain that such a thing would not be trumped up without any ground whatever.

"Of course, my uncle knows what he is about," he said, "and intends to make everything all right; but he could have had no idea the Tourons would come down suddenly this way. If I could only let him know what is in the wind, he'd be back in no time, and put a stop to this foolery."

Phil felt bound to speak as cheerfully and hopefully as he could, but the more he talked and thought upon the subject, the more doleful he felt. Both his friends agreed that the best thing he could do was to see somebody as soon as he could, and they supposed the right person to see was Mr. Welford.

Phil could not help agreeing with them; and,

although he did not care to see Mr. Welford again after the way in which he had been treated by that gentleman in his last interview, he made up his mind to pay him a visit early the next morning. The matter was very urgent, and there was no one else with whom he could consult.

Joel now appeared upon the porch.

"That young French gentleman," said he, "wants his clothes and things. He's going away. He asked me to pack them up in his little trunk and bring it out to him. He says the people here haven't been polite to him,"—and here Joel burst into a laugh at the thought of Phœnix's impoliteness,—“and that he don't care about coming to the house.”

“Where is he going?” cried Phil. “He oughtn’t to leave like this. I'll go and see him.”

“You'd better not,” said Joel. “He's just white mad; and Susan's been telling me you've had one scrimmage to-day. He's going to town, and wants me to take him in the buggy. He's an ugly customer, and you'd better let him go. I suppose I can take the buggy?”

Phil thought a moment, and then concluded that, as Emile would certainly go, it would be better to let him do so without further words.

“All right,” said he to Joel. “You can bring down his trunk, and drive him to town.” And

then, turning to the housekeeper, who was crossing the hall, he said, "Susan, will you please go up-stairs and pack Emile's trunk? You can gather up all his things and put them into it, and then Joel will come and get it when he has hitched the horse to the buggy."

"Certainly," said Susan; "and I'll be glad enough to do it."

And she promptly went up-stairs.

No more astonished boy than Chap ever stood upon a porch. The story of the three brothers, the account of Emile's thrashing, even the astounding news in regard to the Touron mortgage, had not had such an effect upon him as this obedience on the part of Susan. He stood with his mouth open, not knowing what question to ask first.

"You see Susan has come round all right," said Phil, who had noticed his friend's amazement.

"What did you do to her?" gasped Chap. "Did you squirt kerosene into her room—I thought of that myself, and I knew she wouldn't be able to stand it long—or did you pay her up?"

"I didn't do anything," said Phil. "She just came round naturally."

"I didn't believe it was in her," said Chap, solemnly. "Upon my word, Phil, I didn't believe it was in her!"

"I tell you what it is, Phil," said Phoenix, a

short time afterwards, as Joel came down-stairs with Emile's trunk upon his shoulder, "you'd better look out for that Frenchman. He'll be worse now than ever. If I'd known what a regular out-and-out scamp he was, I don't know that I would have licked him. It's some satisfaction to lick a fellow with some good in him, but it don't help a chap like that a bit,—it only makes him worse."

"That's so!" cried Chap. "A thrashing only packs his villainy, and rams down his—his—bloody intentions. We must look out for him, boys, and consider ourselves in a regular state of siege. Every approach must be guarded. I'll get my folks to let me stay here now. It's absolutely necessary. Mother asked me to get her some summer apples this afternoon, and I couldn't come over as soon as I wanted to. But I tell you I climbed that tree with a spy-glass in one hand, and I kept a lookout on the wreck. I wasn't going to let Emily get ahead of me because I had to stay at home a little while. But things will be worse now, boys, and we must stick to our posts."



CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRE ON THE THOMAS WISTAR.

WHEN Mr. Welford heard Phil's story the next morning he looked very grave. He was not altogether surprised at the news, because he had known there was a mortgage upon the property, and, as he remarked to Phil,—

“If a man disappears suddenly and leaves affairs of that kind behind him, he may expect trouble. I am not a lawyer, nor have I full knowledge of your uncle's business, but I know that for some time he has been making arrangements to satisfy all claims against him, and, among other things, to relieve his property of this mortgage, which was intended to be a temporary thing, and was given to satisfy old Tournon, who insisted, as soon as your grandfather died, upon having his claim against your uncle secured in this way. I would have expected Tournon to foreclose the mort-

gage if he had a legal chance, which I suppose he has."

"But why should he do it just at this time?" asked poor Phil.

"That shows his talent for business," said Mr. Welford. "What he wants is not his money, but Hyson Hall. And, having heard that your uncle is away, he sends his son here to see if his absence is likely to continue for any considerable time. Such a condition of affairs would be of great advantage to him. If your uncle were here, he might pay whatever interest or part of the principal was due, and so stop proceedings."

"How could Mr. Touron have heard that my uncle had gone away?"

"He lives in New York, and such news could readily travel that far. Old Touron keeps a sharp lookout on his debtors. I never met his son, but I know he has spent most of his life in France, where, of late, he has been acting as his father's business agent. I've no doubt he is a sharp fellow."

"I know he is," said Philip. "He is in town now. He left us yesterday."

"Then I believe I saw him," said Mr. Welford. "Has he dark hair and eyes, and a very small moustache? And is he rather taller than you?"

"That's like him," said Phil.

“Then I saw him in Mr. Markle’s office, where I stopped for a moment this morning. He is probably engaging Markle to attend to the matter.”

“That looks very badly, does it not, sir?” said Phil, with a little huskiness in his voice.

Mr. Welford had much more sympathy for his visitor than when he came to him in regard to the trouble with Susan. This was something of an entirely different nature.

“It does look badly, my boy,” he said, “but you must not despair. I have no authority to attend to this affair; but your uncle is my friend, and I’ll take it upon myself to see a lawyer, and have the property protected, if possible. One thing you must remember. If you can in any way find out where your uncle is, you must do it, and let him know how things are going on. His presence here is more important than anything else.”

“I do wish that I had the slightest idea where he is!” exclaimed Phil. “All that I can find out is that he walked away with a knapsack on his back.”

“In that way he has travelled long distances,” said Mr. Welford. “But he may be crossing the Atlantic now for all we know. Of one thing we may be certain, your uncle has not run away from his debts. He is an honorable man.”

"I know that," said Phil, warmly.

"Yes," continued Mr. Welford. "He is undoubtedly careless, and his mind is occupied with too many things ; but he is not dishonorable. And now, my boy, go home, and make yourself as easy as you can. I'll find out how things are going on, and let you know. By the way, how did you manage that affair with the housekeeper ? Have you discharged her ?"

"Oh, no, sir !" said Phil. "That's all right. We're good friends again."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Mr. Welford. "That looks as if you were getting into the right way."

And he laid his hand on Phil's shoulder, which was a good deal for Mr. Welford to do for any boy.

When Phil left the banker's office he made up his mind that his great duty was to find his uncle. This was the only thing that he could even try to do now ; but how to set about it he did not know.

As he rode away, he saw a crowd of people running down towards the river-front of the town. He stopped a boy, and asked him what was the matter.

"The Thomas Wistar's afire !" said the boy, as he scampered off.

Phil knew the Thomas Wistar very well. She was a large steamboat, which had run upon the

river for many years. She was once a passenger-boat, but lately had been used to carry freight. At any other time he would have hurried down to the river with the crowd; but just now he felt that this was not the time for him to be going to fires. He must hasten home. Perhaps his uncle might be there.

He had not gone half a mile before he saw two men in a wagon driving rapidly towards him. Just as he reached them they turned into a cross-road which led down to the river. One of them called back to him,—

“There’s a boat on fire, floating down the river!”

Phil looked over the fields and could see the heavy black smoke in the direction of the river. Still he did not follow the men, but pushed on towards home faster than before.

“If she’s floating down the river,” he thought, “I can see her from our house.”

The road from Boontown to Hyson Hall was half a mile back from the river, and on his way Phil could get no view of the conflagration, but, as he looked back, he sometimes saw the smoke, which never seemed to be far behind him.

“She’s coming down pretty fast,” he thought.

“The Thomas Wistar is afire!” he said to Joel, when he dismounted at the barn.

“There’s none of my property on board,” re-

marked Joel, as he took Jouncer's bridle and led him to the stable.

Hurrying to the house, Phil met Jenny, who told him that Chap Webster and Phœnix Poole had been there, and had gone down to the river.

Phil ran round the house and over the fields to the water. He found Chap and Phœnix in the scow, which they had poled to some distance from the shore, and had anchored over the place where Phœnix had found the side of a ship.

Apparently, they had not been diving, and were now standing in the scow looking at the burning steamer, not half a mile away.

"What boat is it?" shouted Chap, as Phil appeared on the shore. "We can't make her out."

"The Thomas Wistar," cried Phil. "Come ashore for me!"

There was a small row-boat fastened to the scow, and into this Phœnix jumped and ferried Phil over to the scow.

"I brought our little boat down," said Chap, "because I didn't know but the scow might be aground, and I want to see what I can find out about this thing before the war opens. I hope nobody is aboard the Wistar. She looks as if she was bound to burn up."

The burning steamboat, which was coming down

the river with the wind and the tide, presented a grand spectacle. Great clouds of black smoke arose from her, which, every now and then, were lighted up by flashes of flame.

The wind was a little behind her, on her port side, and as she floated down, turned partly sideways to the current, it blew the heavy clouds of smoke in front of her, sometimes almost concealing her bow and paddle-wheels from view.

The fire, which broke out as she lay at her wharf that morning, had got beyond control, and she had been cut loose and set adrift for fear that, on account of the high wind, the fire might spread to other vessels, and to the buildings on the river-front.

“I don’t believe anybody is aboard of her,” said Phil. “There must have been time for all hands to get off. If any people were on her there’d be boats coming down to take them off.”

“There isn’t any steamboat in town, except the old tub of a ferry-boat,” said Chap, “and they’d be afraid to bring her anywhere near, for fear she’d take fire herself.”

“I wonder how far she’ll float down the river,” said Phoenix, “before she burns to the water’s edge and sinks?”

“Give it up,” said Chap. “But I tell you what it is, boys, this would have been a gorgeous show

at night. We could have seen the blaze better then, and the sky and the water would have been lighted up for miles. It would have gone ahead of any fireworks we ever saw."

"If they had only known you wanted a show," said Phœnix, "they might have smothered the fire and put off the display till night."

"Phœnix," said Chap, "don't get in the way of making fun of people. It's sometimes worse than thrashing 'em. But she does look grand, doesn't she, boys?"

The Thomas Wistar was now approaching quite near, and although she was well out in the river, the boys fancied they could feel the heat from her, for the wind was blowing somewhat in their direction.

When she was nearly opposite to them, they could see her stern, which before had been obscured by the clouds of smoke which rolled in front of her, and it was evident that so far the fire had not extended to that portion of the vessel. The strong wind blew sparks, smoke, and flame all forward.

"Boys," cried Phil, "let's row up to her! There may be somebody on board of her!"

"There isn't anybody on her," said Chap, "or they'd be on deck."

"We can go up close and shout," said Phil.

"There might be somebody below. There isn't any danger if we keep behind the fire. Come along!"

And he jumped into the row-boat.

Without another word the two boys tumbled in after him, and, untying the rope which held them to the scow, Chap seized the oars and rowed out to the burning steamboat.



CHAPTER XVI.

SPATTERDOCK POINT.

THE three boys in the boat soon reached the stern of the burning steamboat. Here the wind kept them entirely free from smoke and sparks, and they rowed several times around the stern, shouting loudly, so as to attract the attention of any one who might be on board.

But no answer came to them, and they saw no signs of any living being on the vessel. The tide carried them along with the steamboat, but the wind had so much influence on the larger craft that Chap had to row quite steadily to keep up with her.

Phil, who was forward, threw the rope of the small boat over the chain on the rudder of the steamboat, and held fast.

“Look out!” cried Chap, as he turned around. “We don’t want to go down with her if she sinks!”

“ You needn’t be afraid of that,” replied Phil ; “ I’ll let go in time.”

“ She’s not going to be in any hurry to sink,” said Phoenix. “ The fire is all forward and in her upper works ; but there’s no use in hanging on to her, there’s nobody on board.”

“ Boys,” cried Phil, “ this chain is loose at the other end ! We’re pulling it out. The pilot-house and wheel must be all burnt up.”

“ Let’s pull the whole of it out !” cried Chap. “ We might as well save something from the fire. We could use the chain in our work on the wreck.”

“ We couldn’t get it loose from the rudder,” said Phil, “ and it wouldn’t be ours if we did save it.”

“ It’s a great pity,” said Phoenix, “ that this big steamboat should burn up, and everything be lost. There are people on the shore on the other side, and the folks are coming over the field on our side, but none of them can do any good.”

“ Nothing could do any good,” said Chap, “ except a steamboat with a fire-engine on board. It would be no use for any other kind of boat to come near her.”

“ If she would only drift ashore,” said Phoenix, “ it would be better than her sinking out here.”

“ The current is so strong it keeps her out,”

said Chap. "If the tide wasn't running down so hard the wind would blow her in on our side."

"If we could get this rudder round," said Phil, "and keep it hard up, I believe the wind would take her in shore."

"Yes," said Chap; "but how are you going to do it? You couldn't push a rudder around and make it fast."

"Boys," cried Phil, "let's go aboard! There isn't any danger, and if we can find a tiller up there we can ship it, and perhaps we can steer the old Wistar in shore."

"But how would you get up?" asked Phœnix.

"If we stand up in the bow we can reach that little window," said Phil. "If somebody below would give us a boost then we could throw up one hand and get hold of the railings. After that it would all be easy enough."

"But who is going to boost the last fellow?" asked Chap.

"One of us ought to stay in the boat anyway," said Phil, "to row around and pick us up if we have to jump overboard."

"You talk as if you were going, anyway," said Chap.

"I'd like to," answered Phil; "and suppose, Chap, you stay in the boat. You can boost better than any of us, because you are so tall."

"All right!" said Chap. "I suppose somebody ought to stay in the boat."

"It will be a ticklish job," remarked Phœnix, as he took off his coat. "But I guess we'll try it."

Chap now stood up in the boat, balancing himself as carefully as he could, and when Phil had taken hold of the window-sill, which he could just reach, Chap gave him a lift which enabled him, at the first grasp, to seize the railing of the lower deck.

For a moment he dangled there, looking into the window. He could see nothing, for there were goods piled up inside. Then he got one foot on the window-sill, and scrambled on board.

Phœnix found the feat more difficult. His first trouble was that he could not reach the window-sill. Chap offered to lift him bodily, but Phœnix objected.

"If I haven't got hold of something above," he said, "we'll go over, boat and all."

Then Chap hauled out an old box from under the stern, and set it upon one of the seats. On this Phœnix cautiously mounted, and reached the window-sill. Then Chap attempted to boost him, but Phœnix was so heavy that he found it no easy thing to do.

On his first attempt his vigorous efforts nearly

upset the boat, but he succeeded at last, and when Phoenix got hold of the railing he very quickly hauled himself up.

He found Phil hard at work untying a tiller which had been made fast on one side of the deck.

“Get that other end loose,” cried Phil, “and we’ll ship her in a minute.”

The boys quickly unfastened the tiller, and then they ran it into one of the square holes in the end of the rudder-post, which projected above the lower deck on which they stood.

“Now, pull around!” cried Phil. “Push her over towards the wind!”

Phil had frequently been out with his uncle in a sail-boat, and had some pretty clear ideas about navigation. The boys pushed against the end of the tiller with all their force, and gradually it moved around. The smoke rolled up from the forward part of the vessel, the sparks flew far ahead; but there was no heat at the stern of the boat, and the boys did not believe that there was any fire beneath them.

“Hurrah!” cried Chap, from below. “She’s going around a little! Stick to her, boys, and hold her hard. If it’s too much for you, I’ll get aboard and help.”

“Don’t you do it!” shouted Phil. “We want

that boat to be ready for us. Don't you leave her, Chap."

"All right!" shouted Chap. "Put her round harder yet, boys, and hold her."

The Thomas Wistar, now held by her rudder, was being gradually turned by the wind, so that her bow was directed towards the Hyson Hall side of the river. The breeze was still on one side of her, but more astern than it had been, and it was evident that if the rudder could be held in its present position she would, before long, be blown in shore; but whether or not Phil and Phœnix could remain aboard long enough for this to happen was a question both to them and to Chap, who kept an anxious watch on them from below. Even now, for aught any of them knew, the fire might be spreading beneath them.

"I do believe," said Phil, "that this deck is beginning to feel hot under my feet."

"I guess it's because you're so hot yourself," said Phœnix. "We'd see smoke coming out of some of the cracks if the fire was getting under us."

There was no doubt, however, that the fire was approaching the stern of the vessel. The wind was not blowing so hard as it had been, and whenever there was a partial lull in it the boys would feel great puffs of heat, and clouds of smoke would

gather over them ; then, when the breeze freshened again, the heat and the smoke would be blown away, and they could breathe freer. They could see people on shore, who were shouting to them, but the fire made such a roaring noise they could not hear what was said.

“ Lash that tiller to the railings and come off ! ” shouted Chap, who kept his boat quite near them. “ The fire will spread to the stern before you know it, and the whole thing will blaze up in a flash. Come off, I tell you, if you don’t want to be cooked alive.”

“ I wish we could find a piece of rope,” said Phil, “ and we’d tie this tiller fast, and get off.”

“ I believe we chucked those bits overboard when we cut the tiller loose,” said Phœnix, “ for I can’t see them ; but they weren’t strong enough, anyway.”

“ It will take a pretty stout rope to hold this tiller,” said Phil.

He was right, for every muscle of the boys was strained to keep the rudder in its position. If it had not been for the great strength of Phœnix, it is probable that they could not have done it.

The wind now seemed to have shifted, for a sudden cloud of smoke was blown right over the stern of the boat. In ten seconds more the boys would have let go the tiller and jumped over-

board, but the smoke was blown away again, and they stood to their work.

"I hate to give it up now," said Phil. "We must be going in, for the shore is getting nearer and nearer."

Chap, who kept steadfastly on the windward side of the steamboat, and as near as possible to his friends, had been about to shout when the last puff of smoke came over them, that if they didn't come off he would come on board and pitch them off, but suddenly changed his tune. He had fallen a little astern, and glancing shoreward, had pulled his boat to the other side of the Wistar, where he could see both the shore and her bow. Pulling back to the boys, he shouted,—

"Stick to her! Stick to her! She's heading splendidly for Spatterdock Point! She'll be aground in a minute!"

This encouragement came none too soon. The air was getting decidedly hot around the boys, and the sides of the saloon cabin, which rose before them and prevented their seeing the fire, were beginning to smoke. This was not certainly a sign of immediate danger, for the cabin was probably filled with smoke, which was escaping from the cracks around the windows, which, fortunately, were all closed.

Phenix had just been on the point of proposing

that they should get out of this thing as quickly as they could, when Chap's words came, and he forbore.

The eyes of the boys smarted with smoke and heat, and their backs and legs began to ache with the great strain of holding that swashing rudder. If the boat had been going faster through the water they could not have done it.

But their hearts held out, and if they were nearing the shore they would not give out just yet.

Directly, there was a gentle jar, which ran from the bow to the stern, and which the boys distinctly felt beneath their feet.

“The bow has touched!” shouted Phil. “Now put the rudder round and let the wind blow her stern in shore.”

With renewed vigor the boys pushed the end of the tiller to the other side of the deck, and, as Phil had said, the wind slowly blew the stern of the boat shoreward.

“She's all right now!” cried Phil. “Let her go and skip.”

Whereupon they skipped.

Over the railings and down the side of the steamboat they went, sliding or dropping, they scarcely knew which, and if Chap had not been ready with his boat, they would both have gone into the water. There was no more danger than

there had been a few minutes before, but the moment their work was done a panic had seized them, and they felt they could not get away from that steamboat too soon.

“If you fellows had fallen into the water,” said Chap, as he hurriedly pulled ashore, “you would have taken your deaths of cold, for I never saw you look so hot.”

By the time the Wistar had been blown ashore, there was a little crowd of people on the beach. Some of them had followed the burning steamboat for some distance, and had run over the fields to the river when they saw her coming in. Even Joel’s apathy had yielded to the general excitement, and he waded into the water and pulled in the bow of the boys’ boat before it touched the sand.

“If ever there was a pair of boys,” he said, addressing the red-faced Phil and Phœnix, “as wanted a gar-deen, it’s you two. If your uncle had seen you aboard that bonfire,” he continued, addressing Phil, “he’d ‘a’ gone wild.”

Neither Phil nor Phœnix made any reply to this remark, but walking up the bank out of the way of the heat and the smoke, they sat down to watch the subsequent proceedings. For the present they felt as if they had done enough. Chap, however, rushed in among the people,

hoping at last that he might be able to do something.

Now that the boat was securely aground in shallow water, and there was a good chance of their getting off if the fire came too near, the men on shore, who would not have dared to go near the blazing steamer when she was out in the river, showed a determination to do what they could to save at least a portion of the boat and cargo.

The boards were torn from a neighboring fence and placed from the shore to the lower deck of the Wistar, and up these slippery and very much inclined gang-planks several men quickly clambered. A heavy hawser which lay on deck was passed on shore, and the boat was made fast to a tree.

The forward part of the Thomas Wistar was now burned to the water's edge, and although the freight in that part of the vessel was still burning, it was believed the fire did not now extend abaft the engine.

Late in the afternoon, a steam-tug from the city, which had been telegraphed for from Boontown, arrived, with a fire-engine on board, and the fire on the Thomas Wistar was soon extinguished.

Long before this event occurred, however, three very hungry boys went up to Hyson Hall to dinner.



CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH A COUNCIL IS HELD.

THE next morning, when Chap Webster came over to Hyson Hall, he brought his sister Helen with him. Phœnix Poole was already there, for he was determined to make the best of the period of slack work on his father's farm, and he arrived very early in the day.

“Mother sent me,” said Helen to Philip, “to see if you are getting on comfortably here, and if you needed anything we could do for you. She would have come herself, but she could not do so to-day because she had things to attend to which she could not very well leave.”

Mrs. Webster was a good lady, who never went away from her home except on Sunday, because she always had things to attend to which she could not very well leave.

“Mother thinks that men can't get along in a

house by themselves," said Chap. "I don't agree with her; but, if you want anything done in the way of buttons, or casting a general eye over dusty corners, Helen is just as good as she is."

"Oh, I don't need anything of that kind!" said Phil, laughing. "Susan attends to me first-rate. But it's comfortable to have neighbors like your mother, who are kind enough to send to see how a fellow is getting along."

"Another thing mother wants to know," said Helen, "and that is if you really do want Chap to come and stay with you. He has been going on at a great rate, trying to make us think that something like a band of Indians was coming to attack the house, and that he ought to stay here to help you keep them from climbing in at the doors and windows."

"People don't climb in at doors," said Chap.

"Well, they get in somehow," said Helen. "But do you really want him, Phil?"

"Not for that kind of thing," said Phil; "but I should be very glad to have him come and stay with me till uncle comes back. And Phœnix, too," he added.

"There's no use talking about that," said Phœnix. "It's hard enough for me to get off in the daytime."

"There's only one difficulty in the way," said

Phil, coloring a little. "I don't know that I'll be able to feed any visitors. The money uncle left with Mr. Welford to keep this castle in running order has about given out—"

"Oh, pshaw!" said Chap, interrupting, "there's always plenty of flour and butter and eggs and vegetables on a place like this; and if we want butcher's meat and groceries, mother can send them over from our house, and call them my rations."

"Uncle wouldn't like that," said Phil, "and we never run up any bills with the people in town."

"At any rate," said Chap, "if one fellow can get along here, two can. If that's the only objection you have to my staying here, I'm going to stay. I don't think you ought to be left alone."

"Nor I, either," said Phil; "and if I starve you, you can go home to your meals."

"Well, then, I suppose everything is going on all right," said Helen, "except the money, of course, and I'm sure there will be no trouble about that. Your uncle will remember that he didn't leave you enough, and will send you some, if he doesn't intend to come back soon."

"I don't know about that," said Phil; "but everything else isn't all right. I would like you all to hear a letter I got this morning, and then to tell me whether you think that it is all right or

not. I suppose Chap has told you, Helen, about that Touron fellow that was here?"

"I believe Chap has told me everything that has happened here, and everything he knew about everything, and I hope he hasn't told me more than he ought to."

"Not if he didn't draw too much on his imagination," said Phil. "I knew he always told you everything, and I don't mind a bit your knowing what is going on here. Now just listen, all of you, to this letter from Mr. Welford."

Helen Webster, who had a very practical and business-like side to her character, sat straight up in the wicker chair which Phil had brought out on the porch for her, and prepared to give her earnest attention to all the details of Mr. Welford's communication.

Chap stood up straight, with his hands in his pockets and a cloud on his brow. He had always had his doubts of that Welford, and was prepared to criticise whatever he might hear. Phoenix, who was a good hand at paying attention, but a poor one to talk, sat on a bench, with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, and gazed steadfastly at Phil.

Mr. Welford's letter read as follows:

"MASTER PHILIP BERKELEY,—Sir——"

"He begins as stiff as a poker," said Chap.

"And he stirred me up like a poker, too," said Phil.

And then he read on :

"I have put the matter of the mortgage on Hyson Hall into the hands of Mr. John P. Harrison, who will see what can be done. In the mean time, I desire you to make every effort to find out your uncle's whereabouts, and to acquaint him with the state of affairs. I shall put an advertisement into several newspapers, requesting him to return as soon as possible."

"Your uncle won't like that," cried Chap. "I shouldn't wonder if he thrashed old Welford as soon as he comes back."

"Oh, Chap," said Helen, "he wouldn't do that!"

"No," said Phil, "he won't thrash him, but I know he won't like it. But the worst part of the letter is to come."

Phil then read :

"And now, sir, I have to say that I have received very discreditable accounts of you. I have been told, and have been assured that every word of the statements can be proved, that young Touron was shamefully treated at your uncle's house. You attempted to shoot him with a gun, and he was afterwards dreadfully beaten by one of your comrades. Such conduct, sir, is outrageous and amazing. You are not only acting in an unlawful and ungentlemanly manner, but you are directly working against the most important interests of your uncle by injuring and exasper-

ating the holders of the mortgage on his property, so that they will push their claims to the utmost limit. What action against you personally may be taken by the Tourons I do not know. If you get into trouble you must apply to Mr. Harrison. There is no more money subject to your order in my hands, and I wish to have no further communication with you.

“HENRY G. WELFORD.”

“Upon — my—word!” exclaimed Chap. “A pretty gentleman! No ‘Yours truly,’ or even ‘Yours respectfully!’ I tell you what it is, Phil, I always believed that that Welford ought to have been put down in the beginning. What he wanted was the iron heel. It mightn’t have seemed to work at first, but he’d have crumbled before long. Look at Susan!”

“I think the letter is perfectly shameful,” said Helen, disregarding her brother’s remarks. “What dreadful stories that French boy must have told!”

“Indeed, he did,” said Phil, warmly. “I never tried to shoot him at all. I only took the gun from Susan, and I did not even raise it. If he hadn’t been such a coward he’d have seen that.”

“I wish I hadn’t licked him,” said Phoenix. “I didn’t think he’d cut up as rough as this.”

“Phil,” cried Chap, extending his right arm, as if he were addressing an audience, “if I were you

I tell you what I'd do. I'd just go to this Welford and tell him that what Touron said was a lie from beginning to end——”

“But it wasn't,” interrupted Phœnix.

“I'd tell him,” continued Chap, “that I hadn't had the slightest idea of shooting him, for the stairs are so long I could easily have popped him before he got to the top if I had wanted to, and that I hadn't anything to do with beating him, but that he deserved all he got, and that if my friend, Mr. Phœnix Poole, hadn't thrashed him, I'd have done it myself. And if you don't like to go and say all that, I'll go and say it for you.”

“Now, Chap,” cried Helen, “don't you be putting any such ideas into Phil's head, and don't you go near Mr. Welford yourself. You will only make matters worse.”

“And I am not going, either,” said Phil. “I should be sure to say something I ought not to. I think he has treated me outrageously!”

“It is the cruellest thing I ever heard of,” said Helen. “He ought not to believe what the French boy said without hearing your side. But you are right in not going to see him now. It would only make a dreadful quarrel.”

“But I shall answer his letter,” said Phil, “and tell him what I think of it.”

“Please don't,” said Helen, rising up and coming

up to Phil,—“not while you are so angry. If Mr. Welford knew just how things were, he’d think very differently. But it won’t do any good to make him madder. Don’t one of you boys do a single thing till I have seen mother and told her all about it. She used to know Mr. Welford very well, and she’ll tell us what ought to be done. And now, if there isn’t anything I can do for you, it is time for me to go. Mother said Chap could stay with you if you really wanted him, and I don’t believe there will be any trouble about your not having things to eat. There’s always lots of things on a place like this, and Chap isn’t particular, and mother will send some pies, and anything else you don’t happen to have.”

“Good!” cried Chap. “Just you tell mother that this garrison is greatly in need of pies, and one of those rolled-up blackberry puddings would make us hold out splendidly. Do you want me to go home with you?”

“No,” said Helen; “I’m going to take the straight path across the fields. Good-by!”



CHAPTER XVIII.

TOURON IN THE FIELD.

ABOUT ten o'clock the next morning a high, old-fashioned carriage, swung on straps like a stage-coach, and with a little seat near the roof for the driver, was being slowly drawn into Boontown. It had been originally intended for two horses, but on this day only one horse could be spared, and his driver, an elderly colored man, allowed him to jog along at a very easy gait. Inside the coach might be seen a very pretty but a very anxious face, and this belonged to Helen Webster.

The queer old vehicle was the Webster family carriage, and in it Helen was going to see Mr. Welford. She had talked to her mother about Phil's troubles, and Mrs. Webster became so much interested in the subject, that if she had not had a great many things to attend to at home that she

could not very well leave, she would have gone to town to see Mr. Welford herself.

It would have been of no use to speak to Mr. Webster about the matter, because he was a quiet and rather timorous man, who avoided all disputes and dissensions by never taking anybody's part, and never quarrelling himself. Nothing annoyed him so much as being consulted in regard to trouble between neighbors, and so, in this case, he was not consulted.

After much talking, Mrs. Webster declared that she did not see why Helen could not go and talk to Mr. Welford, because she, her mother, could tell her exactly what she ought to say, and it would be the same thing as if she went there and said it herself.

Helen did not like this plan, for she was afraid of Mr. Welford, but she consented to go, for Phil must certainly be set right, and there seemed to be no one to do it but herself. So off she started this morning in the carriage, her mother having previously spent an hour in telling her exactly what she ought to say.

The nearer she came to town the slower she wished the horse would go. If Mr. Welford's office had been five miles the other side of Boontown, she would have been very glad. She tried her best to put what her mother had told her in

proper order in her mind, but, somehow, the various instructions became strangely jumbled up, the old coach jarred and jolted so much with only one person in it, that when she reached Mr. Welford's office, she did not feel at all ready to lay her business before him.

At first she thought of telling old William to drive round several blocks, but this she knew would be ridiculous. She hoped Mr. Welford was not in; indeed, she felt quite encouraged when she thought that at this time of day he might probably be out attending to business. But the young man at the table in the front room told her Mr. Welford was in, and she was shown into that gentleman's private office. Mr. Welford greeted her kindly, but evidently did not recognize her.

"You don't remember me," she said, in rather a low voice. "I am Helen Webster."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Welford. "I didn't know you. I have not seen you since you were a very little girl."

Then he shook hands with her, offered her a seat, and asked her questions about her father and mother. After these had been answered, there was a pause, and then Helen thought it was time to state her business, but she could not, for the life of her, remember how her mother had told her to begin.

"I came to talk to you about Philip Berkeley,"

she said, after she had remained quiet for a time that to her seemed dreadfully long.

“That boy at Hyson Hall?” asked Mr. Welford, quickly.

“Yes, sir,” said Helen.

Mr. Welford’s face grew very dark.

“Never in all my life,” he said, “did I hear of a boy who gave so much trouble in so short a time as this Philip Berkeley! Scarcely has his uncle left him to himself when he begins a career of horse-racing and general mad-cap behavior, actually taking possession of people’s hats, and hanging them up in grocery stores to be called for; then he comes to me with a likely story of having quarrelled with one of his servants, and needing hundreds of dollars to pay her off and discharge her, and as soon as he finds he can’t get the money he tells me the quarrel is at an end; he then actually attempts to kill a young man staying in his house, and, failing in this, causes his visitor to be dreadfully beaten by one of his associates. I did not intend to say so much about him, but the very thought of the young rascal makes me indignant. And now, what has he been doing to you, or your family? I suspected that it would not be long before we should hear complaints from some of his neighbors.”

Helen sprang to her feet, pushed back her chair,

and stood up in front of Mr. Welford. She did not now remember a word her mother had told her to say, nor did she care to. Her eyes sparkled, her face was flushed, and words came to her almost faster than she could utter them.

“ Doing to us !” she exclaimed. “ He never did anything to us that wasn’t as good and kind as it could be,—and to everybody else, too, for that matter. And that is just what mother sent me to tell you. She would have come herself, but she couldn’t; and she thinks it’s a shame ! And we all think it’s a shame that a boy like Philip Berkeley, who is all the time trying to do the best he can, and who has ever so many dreadful things to contend with, should get such a letter as the one you wrote to him. Everything that French boy told you was a falsehood, and he knew it ; and all that Phil told you was true about the housekeeper and her money and all. My brother Chap, who is with him all the time, and knows everything he does, has told me all about everything from beginning to end. And he never ran away with anybody’s hat, except by accident.”

And then Helen, who had waxed as warm and eloquent as if she had been her own brother Chap, gave Mr. Welford a detailed account of the actual facts in connection with the matters that had excited his indignation.

She put the cases so clearly and strongly before him, and with such an earnestness and evident interest in the subject, that at last Mr. Welford could not help smiling.

“As far as young Berkeley is concerned,” he said, “it is just as well, perhaps, that your mother did not come, for I don’t believe she would have advocated his cause half so warmly as you have. If what you say is correct——”

“And it is, every word of it,” said Helen. “I wouldn’t come here to tell you things that were not true, sir!”

“Oh, of course!” said Mr. Welford. “I understand that perfectly. I meant to say if you are correctly informed.”

“My own brother told me,” said Helen. “And as to the letter, Phil read that to me himself. There could be no mistake about that.”

“You seem to think my letter the worst part of the whole proceeding,” said Mr. Welford.

“Of course, I do, sir!” said Helen. “And we all do,—that and the French boy’s story.”

“Well,” said Mr. Welford, “you appear to be turning the tables pretty completely. The accounts I received regarding Philip Berkeley were so straightforward, and apparently so well based upon fact, that I could not help believing them, especially when I remembered what I knew about

him myself. But, after what you have said, I will carefully investigate each one of these charges, and if I find I have been mistaken I will say so. Will that be satisfactory to you and to your mother, and to the rest of the family?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Helen. "And the reason why I came instead of one of the boys was that Phil and Chap are so angry there is no knowing what they would have said. And as to Phoenix Poole, he is so good and quiet, and always behaves so well, that when he does get roused up he is perfectly terrible. That is the way he came to thrash the French boy."

"I am glad he did not come," said Mr. Welford. "I would much rather have had you than any of them. And now, good-by! I will give attention to all you have told me."

As Helen drove away, and thought of all she had said to Mr. Welford, and how she had stood up and talked to that respectable and dignified gentleman, just as if he had been a boy or a girl of her own age, she covered her face with her hands and cried all the way home.

That day was a busy one at Hyson Hall. Early in the morning Joel announced to Phil that the wheat crop was ready to be harvested, and that hands must be engaged for the work. To Phil's statement that there was no money to pay these

hands, Joel simply answered that the crop must be got in, no matter what happened ; and, if there was no money, some wheat would have to be threshed out and sold to pay the men. He admitted that this was a poor way of doing business, for wheat would bring a low price at this season, but, then, Mr. Godfrey might be back before the work was done and everything would be all right. It was, therefore, agreed that Joel should start early the next day to look up hands.

Preparations for the harvest occupied Phil and Joel all day. Phoenix was not there, and Chap was left much to himself. He had come to the conclusion that the state of affairs on this place demanded that the man with the black straw hat should come to the front.

To be sure, that individual had requested to be summoned only upon Mr. Godfrey Berkeley's return ; but Chap thought if he could do any good he ought to come now. If he had any plan about getting the treasure out of that wreck, this was the time for him to go to work to do it ; or it might be that he could make statements that would enable them to raise money, not only for wrecking purposes, but for the general needs of the estate.

So he took from his pocket the postal card that the man had given him—which by this time had

become pretty well rumpled and a little dirty—and prepared to write a note on it. The card was addressed to "Mr. Alexander Muller, 340 Sixth Avenue, New York."

Chap had an idea that this message should be something like a telegram,—very compact and to the point,—a message which the person receiving it should understand, and no one else. So, after a good deal of thought and study, he produced the following:

"Personage you were on track of not arrived. Your immediate presence demanded. If necessary, order batteries sent. Additional reasons for secrecy and despatch.

"CH—N W—R."

When this was done, Chap took it to town and mailed it, walking all the way there and back.

The next morning, after breakfast, a boy appeared on the porch with a note for Phil. When the latter opened and read it he gave a great shout.

"Hello, Chap!" he cried, "it's from uncle!"

Chap seized the paper held out to him and read,—

"DEAR PHIL,—Send me Old Bruden by bearer.

"G. B."

"That's his writing," said Chap.

"Certainly it is!" cried Phil, in a high state of

excitement. "Where is Mr. Berkeley?" he said to the boy.

"I don't know anything about him," was the answer. "A man gave me the note, and told me I was to bring a gun to him, and he would give me a quarter."

"Where is the man?" asked Phil.

"He's down on the road, sitting by the little bridge; but he said if anybody came with me he wouldn't give me a cent."

"Look here, Chap," cried Phil, "if uncle is down there I'm bound to see him and tell him what is going on here. He has some reason for not wanting to come back just now, but he don't know what a dreadful condition things are in. Here is a quarter," he said to the boy, "so you won't lose anything. Just you stay here a few minutes. I'll cut over the fields to the bridge," he said to Chap, as he ran down the steps.

"Aren't you going to take him the gun?" said Chap.

"No!" cried Phil, as he hurried off. "When he hears what I have to tell he won't want to go gunning."

The boy now started to go.

"Just you sit down and rest yourself," said Chap, stepping in front of him.

"But I'm not tired," said the boy.

“Well, try how it goes to rest yourself when you are not tired,” said Chap. “It’s something you ought to learn, and you had better begin now. There’s a bench behind you.”

The boy reluctantly sat down, and Chap stood guard over him, determined to keep him there long enough to prevent him from giving notice to the man at the little bridge that Phil was coming.



CHAPTER XIX.

PHIL AND CHAP START ON AN EXPEDITION.

WHEN Phil left the house, after receiving the note from his uncle, he ran down past the barn, climbed two fences, and hurried over the fields to a little stream, which ran through the Hyson Hall property and then crossed the public road.

There was a bridge here, which was a favorite resting-place for foot-travellers in summer-time. The spot was shaded by a large tree, and there were some grassy banks, which were very pleasant to sit upon.

Here it was that the person who sent the note to Hyson Hall was to wait for Old Bruden to be brought to him ; but when Philip reached the spot he could see no one. He looked on both sides of the bridge and even under it ; he looked up the road, he looked down the road ; he stood up on the fence, and gazed far over the fields in every direc-

tion, but no person could he see. He shouted at the top of his voice, calling out his uncle's name, uttering whoops and yells that could be heard for a considerable distance. He ran down the road for a quarter of a mile, then climbed a fence again, but not a human being was in sight. In about half an hour he hastily returned.

"Chap," said he, "is that boy gone?"

"Yes," answered Chap. "I let him go after I had given you plenty of time to get to the bridge. He said he came from town, and was in an awful hurry to get back. I made him go by the path along the river, so that I'd be sure he wouldn't interfere with you. Did you see your uncle?"

"No," replied Phil. "Did the boy say anything about the person who sent him with the note, —what kind of man he was?"

"No," said Chap, "he didn't say anything about him."

"I'm sorry for that. I thought you'd ask him a lot of questions, and find out if it really was uncle who sent him."

"It's a pity," said Chap, "but I never thought of it. I was giving the boy a lecture about the folly of being in a hurry when he ought to keep quiet, and getting himself into a stew when there was no occasion for it."

"Chap," exclaimed Phil, "if that was uncle, we

are bound to find him! He must be still in this neighborhood, and we must scour the whole country. I expect he's going off again on some sporting expedition, and just came back to get the gun."

"And he didn't want to be interfered with," said Chap, "or to have anybody ask to go along."

"That may be," said Phil; "but why he didn't wait till Old Bruden was brought to him I can't imagine. But we must set out and hunt him up. He's got a good start of us, but we'll take the horses, and we shall be sure to catch up with him. I'm pretty certain he is on foot, from what the boy said."

"All right!" cried Chap, with great animation; "I'm ready!"

"We must both of us go," said Phil, "because it may be necessary to head him off. When he makes up his mind to do a thing, he is not going to let anybody stop him if he can help it. If he sees us, he'll be sure to get away if he can."

"What horses are we going to ride?" asked Chap.

"I'll take Jouncer, and you can ride Kit. As soon as I have spoken to Susan we will run out to the field and catch him."

Susan was not altogether pleased when Phil told her what he and Chap were going to do, and asked

her to put up a couple of luncheons which they could slip in their pockets, as they might not get back until afternoon.

If Joel had been at home, all this would have made no difference to Susan, but she did not like the idea of being left without a man or boy upon the place. But it was of no use to object, and she was really as anxious as any one else to have Mr. Berkeley found.

It took the boys a good while to catch Kit, for he had been so long in the pasture that he had become wild, but at last they cornered him and brought him up to the barn.

Jouncer and he were quickly saddled and bridled, and then Phil ran back to the house. He soon returned, bringing the packages of luncheon, and carrying Old Bruden, with a shot-pouch and powder-flask.

“I brought the gun,” he said, “for if uncle sent for it I suppose he ought to have it, though I know he won’t need it. But he likes to have his orders obeyed.”

“That ought to be done,” said Chap, as they rode away, “especially in war-times like these. It might have been better to let the boy take the gun, and then scoot after him.”

“Very likely,” said Phil; “but there’s no use talking about that now.”

"No," added Chap, "the milk has soaked into the ground out of sight."

"Susan did not like being left alone," said Phil, "but I told her we'd stop at the Poole place and ask Phœnix if he couldn't go over as soon as he got through with his day's work. Joel is away, and we may not be back till dark, you know."

"That's so," said Chap, straightening himself up; "we are not coming back without Mr. Berkeley, dead or alive."

Phœnix was not at home, having been sent to town early in the morning with the spring-wagon. The boys rode on to Boontown, and soon found him busily attending to various commissions.

Phœnix was much surprised at the appearance of his friends, especially when he saw them both mounted and Phil carrying a gun. When he heard what was on hand, he readily agreed to go to Hyson Hall as soon as he got his work done.

"I wish I wasn't so tremendously busy," he said, "for I'd like nothing better than to go along with you; but all I can do is to be over at your place when you get back and hear the news."

Phil then went to nearly every place in town where he was acquainted, and asked if Mr. Berkeley had been recently seen there.

He did not go to Mr. Welford's office, not having heard of Helen's visit to that gentleman;

but Chap went there and made inquiries of the clerk. But no one had seen or heard of Mr. Godfrey Berkeley.

The agent at the railroad station, who knew Mr. Berkeley very well, assured Phil that he had not arrived there by any train, nor had he been there at all. The only thing they heard that seemed anything like a clue to Mr. Berkeley's whereabouts was from a colored woman, whom Phil knew, who lived on the outskirts of the town.

She had seen a man, that morning, cross over the fields near her shanty, and get over a fence into a road which ran northward from the town, and in an almost opposite direction from Hyson Hall.

This man had something on his back which might have been either a bundle or a knapsack, but she did not take any particular notice of him, and had not the slightest idea that it might be Mr. Godfrey Berkeley. If she had thought such a thing as that, she would have sent one of her boys after him to carry his bundle.

"I shouldn't wonder at all if that was uncle," said Phil to Chap. "At any rate, we can't do better than to ride along this road. We can surely find out something more about the man before long."

Emile Touron was boarding at a small tavern

on the main street of Boontown, but not near the centre of business. It was a pleasant, shady place, and not far from the office of Mr. Markle, who had the Hyson Hall mortgage business in hand, and with whom young Touron consulted a great deal more than that gentleman thought necessary.

After breakfast, that morning, Emile had been sitting in an arm-chair in front of the tavern, when he saw, at some distance, a stout boy driving a spring-wagon into town. He immediately went up-stairs, and seated himself at his bedroom window, where, sitting a little back with the curtains partly drawn, he could have a good view of the street. He thought he would prefer to sit there and see *Phœnix* as he drove into town. Then when *Phœnix* had passed, Emile thought it would be a good thing to stay in his room and get another look at him as he went out of town; but before this latter event occurred, Emile was very much amazed to see *Chap* and *Phil* come clattering by, and ride up into the town.

“Oho!” he thought,—but it must be remembered he thought in French,—“it was a good thing for me to come up here. And so they are all in town, eh? They must be going off on some expedition, with their guns and ammunition. This will be a good time for me to go down to that place and see how things are going on.”

Emile now quickly prepared to make a visit to Hyson Hall, but he did not go this time in the rickety carriage from the livery-stable. He had become better acquainted with the resources of the town, and had found out that a grocer, a few doors from the tavern, had a very good horse and buggy, which he occasionally hired out. This Emile procured, and was speedily driving towards Hyson Hall.



CHAPTER XX.

“ZOSE ANGEL BELLS.”

As soon as the boys had departed, Susan went round the lower part of the house, and shut and fastened all the lower doors and windows. Then leaving the house in charge of Jenny, with injunctions to that young person to lock the back door after her, and not to open it or any other until she returned, the vigilant housekeeper went down to the barn, locked and bolted all the doors there and in the stables, and then walked over to the little house where Joel’s mother lived, and, finding this old woman all right, she came back to the house.

About an hour later, she sat down by the dining-room window to rest a little after her morning’s work. Her reflections were not very pleasant, for her mind was much troubled by the present state of affairs. She knew the want of money, and the threatened legal proceedings, and she was afraid there were other troubles which neither she nor

Phil knew anything about. She was always a loyal woman to her employers, and she took a deep interest in this family and its prosperity, but she was very jealous of her own position and prerogatives, and it had been a hard thing for her to change her allegiance from Mr. Godfrey to a mere boy like Phil ; but in a moment of excitement she had done it, and now she was glad of it, especially since there was danger of another boy getting at the head of affairs.

She bitterly hated that French boy. True, she had not intended he should be killed when she gave Phil the gun at the time of the quarrel, and she had good reasons for knowing that nothing of the kind would occur, but she wanted to frighten Emile, and was rejoiced to think how thoroughly she had succeeded. It would be a dreadful thing, she thought, for this estate to pass into the hands of those French people. If she had the money, she would gladly pay the interest on the mortgage, or whatever was necessary to save the property, and would have been certain it would be paid back to her.

As for Mr. Godfrey's going away at such a time, she did not know what to think of it. She had liked him very much ever since as a young man he used to come to visit his father. She believed him to be just and honorable, and she was very

much afraid that he must have gone crazy before he could do a thing like this. He was always a very queer person, not at all like other people.

These rather doleful thoughts were interrupted by the sound of wheels, and looking through the half-open Venetian shutters, she saw the grocer's buggy approaching. When she recognized Emile as the driver, her heart fell within her.

"Why on earth should he come here?" she exclaimed,—"especially to-day."

She did not go to the front door to receive him, but stayed where she was.

In a few moments the voice of Emile was heard outside, loudly calling for some one to take his horse, but Susan did not move.

The calling continued, louder and more peremptory, and at last Jenny came up-stairs to know if she should go to the door.

"No," said Susan.

But, as the shouting went on, the housekeeper presently said, with a sigh,—

"Well, I suppose the rascal won't go away until he has seen some one, so you may go out, Jenny, and tell him that there is no one at home. Perhaps that will satisfy him."

Jenny went out, and was met by a volley of abuse from Emile, but this made little impression upon her.

“There’s no one at home,” she said, “so you’ll have to come again.”

“When will zey be back?” quickly asked Emile.

“I don’t know when Mr. Godfrey will be back,—probably not for a long time,” said Jenny. “And Mr. Phil and Chap Webster don’t expect to come home until after night.”

“All right,” said Emile. “I want somebody to take my horse.”

“There isn’t anybody here to do it,” said Jenny. “Joel is away getting men for harvest.”

Emile smiled.

“If zat is so,” he said, “I will tie him to zis post, and after a while I will take him to ze barn myself.”

He fastened the horse to a hitching-post, and then quickly passing Jenny, who had been gravely watching him, he ran up the porch steps and entered the half-open front door.

Here he was met by Susan, who would have shut the door in his face if she had reached it soon enough, and who confronted him with a countenance that plainly enough expressed the question,—

“What do you want here?”

The moment Emile saw her, his eyes sparkled with rage.

“Aha!” he cried, “you is ze vile woman who

would have me killed ! Now let me tell you zis : When, in two or tree days I am master of zis house, I will drive you out, and I will have you put in ze prison. And now get out of my way ; I want to look at my house."

"Oh," thought Susan to herself, as she clinched her hands, "if Mr. Godfrey only kept a watch-dog ! but he never would do it."

Emile stepped to the parlor doors and threw them wide open.

"Open zose windows !" he cried. "Why you keep it so dark here ?"

"I'll do nothing of the kind," said Susan.

"Zen I'll do it myself," said Emile.

He opened all the parlor shutters, and then walked around the room, scrutinizing the furniture, pictures, and ornaments in a way he had never done before.

Susan could do nothing to prevent him. She could only look on and grind her teeth.

When Emile came out of the parlor, he went into the dining-room.

"When Mr. Berkeley comes home," said Susan, "I will tell him of this, and he will have you punished. You will not be allowed in this country to walk into people's houses and act in this way."

"Humph !" said Emile, shrugging his shoul-

ders; "when your Mr. Berkeley comes home, he will have no home."

Presently a happy idea seemed to strike the French boy. Coming to the hall, where Susan still stood, he said to her,—

"Where are zose bells zat used to dingle-dangle on zis house?"

"It's none of your business where they are," said Susan, shortly.

"Look you here," said Emile, stepping closer to her, with his face turning very dark, "you tell me where are zose bells, or I will make you do it."

It was not easy to frighten Susan, but she may have thought this French fellow capable of any crime. After a moment's reflection, she went into the dining-room and got a key. Then, saying to Emile, "If you must see everything, I suppose you must," she led the way up-stairs. Opening the door of a large room at the very top of the house, she pointed to a row of greenish metal bells, which stood on the floor by one of the walls.

"Now you've seen them," she said, "I hope you are satisfied."

"No, I am not," said Emile. "How do you get out on zis roof?"

"There's a trap-door over there," said Susan, "at the top of that flight of steps."

Emile went up the steps, and opened the door. Then he came back.

"I am going to hang some of zose bells on ze roof," he said. "I see ze little posts are zere yet."

"Mr. Berkeley will not allow that; he took them down himself," said Susan.

"Zat makes no difference to me," remarked Emile. "I s'all hear zose angel bells again."

And, picking up one of the bells, which, though large, was not very heavy, he carried it up the steps.

"All right," thought Susan, "you can hang yourself up there, if you like."

Then, going out of the room door, she locked it, put the key in her pocket, and went down-stairs.

"Now," said she to Jenny, who had been left on guard below, "I have locked that young rascal in the cockloft, and I intend to keep him there till Joel, or some one of the others, comes home. You heard him threaten me, and I'm sure there's no law against my keeping him shut up till there's a boy or a man about the house. I know he is none too good to take something, and carry it away with him."

To these remarks Jenny assented heartily, being thankful that something had occurred to make Susan forget to scold her for having allowed the French boy to come in at the front door.

As the housekeeper went about her work she felt pretty well satisfied with the events of the morning. She hoped that the boys would bring Mr. Godfrey back with them, and was glad to think that in that case the young Frenchman would be on hand to be dealt with as he deserved.

She was also glad that Phil had taken Old Bruden to Mr. Godfrey. Susan was not a superstitious woman as a general thing, but the few notions of the kind she had were strongly rooted in her mind, and she believed that Mr. Berkeley would be more completely master of the situation if he had that gun.

Like most persons who hold superstitious ideas, she had but slight reasons for her belief, but she knew that the former owners of the gun had been masters in their establishments when they kept possession of it, and had ceased to be such when they let it go from them. And this, she believed, would be the case now. Above all things, she feared to have the gun fall into the hands of Emile Touron.

As for that young gentleman, he was quite busily employed for some time after Susan left him. He hung the bell on one of the upright projections which were ranged along the four sides of the roof, and which had been originally placed there to support the bells, which had been the delight of

the heart of the old tea-merchant, Mr. Godfrey's father. These bells were made of very light metal, so that they would easily swing in the wind, and the strong breeze which was blowing made this one ring quite to Emile's satisfaction.

But one bell was not enough. He wanted to hang several of them, and then go below to listen to the effect. Years before, he had been greatly entertained by these bells, which had fixed themselves in his memory as the principal characteristic of the place, and he was anxious to enjoy again the pleasant sensation.

He was so full of his work that, when he went down-stairs again, he did not notice that the door of the loft was shut. He brought up two bells this time, and hung them. Two or three more, he thought, would be enough, and then he would go down on the lawn and hear them ringing in the wind. But, descending again, he noticed the closed door. He ran to it and tried to open it, but it was of no use. He rattled the door-handle, he shouted, he kicked, but no one came.

He grew very angry and a good deal frightened. He had never imagined that the woman would serve him such a trick. He tried to break the lock or force the door, but this was all in vain. The doors at Hyson Hall were very heavy, and the locks massive.

Then he ran out on the roof and shouted, hoping to attract the attention of some one below. But no answer came to him except the jangling of the bells. For a long, long time Emile stayed up there, sometimes running down into the loft, to see if the door had been opened, and then returning to the freer air of the roof.

Susan paid no attention to his shouts or noise, most of which she plainly heard. She supposed he might be hungry, but she also knew he was very angry, and she would not have dared to open the door while she and Jenny were by themselves in the house.

After a while, Emile became tired of shouting and kicking, and sat down on the parapet, gazing around in the hope of seeing some one approaching.

Looking towards the river, a strange object caught his eye. It was the remains of the Thomas Wistar, on Spatterdock Point.

Instantly the idea struck him that this was the wreck he had discovered under water, and which, in some way, had been raised. He did not notice that this was the hull of a steamboat, for it lay at quite a distance from the house, and there were trees intervening, and he did not imagine that there could be two wrecks on the same property.

It is true that Spatterdock Point was some distance from the place to which he had gone with

the other boys to look for the sunken treasure ship ; but Emile was not familiar with the river-front, and did not notice this.

He had heard of the steamboat on fire at Boontown, but, being very busy with his lawyer at the time, had not gone to see it, and had not known of its floating down the river.

“ Those vile boys,” he thought, as he sprang to his feet, and stood with clinched hands gazing at the unfortunate Wistar. “ They’ve got that ship out of the water, and have carried away the treasure. That is the reason they went to town, armed to the teeth. They have stolen my money ! That gold was mine ! Everything on this place belongs to me.”

It may be remarked that Emile always seemed to consider that when the mortgage was foreclosed the estate would belong to him, and not to his father. This was owing to his egotistical way of thinking about things in which he was in any way concerned.

This sight of the wreck of the Wistar made him more angry than ever. He was certain that the boys had carried off all or part of the treasure he had been told about, and he fairly stormed around the flat roof as he thought of it.

Once he saw Jenny below, looking up at him. He leaned over the parapet and yelled at her to come up and unlock the door, but she only smiled.

Enraged, he seized a piece of plaster and threw it at her, but he did not hit her.

Early in the afternoon, a man came walking along the public road towards the little bridge, which has been spoken of before. He had in his hand a book, which he was reading as he walked. Suddenly he stopped, raised his head and listened. He seemed to hear something which surprised him, and the longer he listened the more surprised he appeared.

The wind was blowing from the direction of Hyson Hall, and on the breeze there came the sound of tinkling bells. Presently the man shut up his book, put it in his pocket, and, getting over the fence at one side of the road, he ran up to the top of a little hill, from which he could get a view of Hyson Hall.

He had strong eyesight, and he could plainly see several bells dangling and swinging on the top of the house. At first he seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes, then he turned a little pale, and then his face grew dark.

He was evidently very much troubled. As a fresh gust of wind brought the sound still plainer to his ear, he turned away with a very cold and stern countenance, went down the hill, and, getting over the fence, walked rapidly along the road in the direction from which he had just come.



CHAPTER XXI.

ON SEPARATE ROADS.

ABOUT four o'clock in the afternoon, Susan went up to the door of the loft and unlocked it.

Emile was sitting at the top of the flight of steps that led to the roof, and immediately ran down towards her. Before he could say a word she called out to him,—

“ You can come down now. Phœnix Poole, the boy who thrashed you the other day, is coming, and he will be in the house in a minute. You can talk to him till Mr. Philip comes back.”

Emile rushed past her without a word. He dashed down-stairs, along the hall, and out of the front door. His horse, which had been fed and watered by Susan and Jenny, was still standing by the post where he had hitched him.

Quickly untying him, Emile jumped into the buggy and drove away. The horse, who for a

long time had been impatient to go, trotted gayly, and Emile, who was much more impatient than the horse, whipped him up to make him trot still faster.

When Phil and Chap left the cabin of the negro woman, who had seen a man walking northward along the road which passed her house, they rode for some time before they heard of the man again. Then they met a boy in a wagon, who said he had seen such a man, but he was walking in the field, and he had not taken much notice of him.

There were few houses near the road, but before very long they came to one where a woman was washing clothes in a side-yard. She said she had seen a man pass by, but she wasn't certain whether he had a bundle or not, and could not just then remember whether it was this morning or yesterday morning that she saw him. She had been washing both mornings, and it might have been the day before that he passed.

There was little encouragement in this, but still the boys pushed on, fully convinced that if they found Mr. Berkeley at all, it would be by using their own eyes, and not those of other people. There was a probability that he had passed along this road, and on this they must act.

A little before noon they stopped in a shady place and ate their luncheon, while their horses

made a meal from the grass at the side of the road. Starting again, after the animals had had a sufficient rest, they soon reached a place where the road forked.

Phil knew this part of the country pretty well, having ridden over it with his uncle, and he explained to Chap that the roads, which separated here to go around an extensive piece of woodland, came together again a few miles above. On each branch-road there were several houses where inquiry should be made. He therefore proposed that Chap should take the left-hand road, while he took the one to the right, and whoever reached first the point where the roads joined should wait for the other. This was agreed to, and each boy set out on his separate way.

Chap made several inquiries, without result, and after a time he came to a barn and farm-yard by the roadside. He stopped, and was just about to call out to a boy in the barn, when he suddenly opened his eyes and mouth in amazement.

On a log at the other end of the barn-yard sat the man with the black straw hat. He was talking to a man who was mending a horse-rake.

Chap jumped from Kit's back, tied him to the fence, and ran into the barn-yard.

“Hello!” he cried. “Who on earth would have expected to see you here?”

Mr. Alexander Muller, of 340 Sixth Avenue, New York, turned round quickly on hearing Chap's voice.

"Well!" he exclaimed, rising from the log; "I certainly did not expect to see you, either. Did you come to meet me?"

"I didn't know you were on the road," said Chap.

"I expected to see you to-morrow," said the other, "but came here first to attend to some business. By the way, why did you write me such an astounding note—and on a postal-card, too?"

"Why, you gave me the card," Chap said.

"Yes; but I did not expect anything so exceedingly confidential and startling to be written on it. It came to my boarding-house while I was away, and was put upon the dining-room mantelpiece. I am sure every boarder in the house read it, and I feel that I have since been looked upon as head conspirator in some terrible plot. What on earth did you mean by it? I could not suppose it was anything important, but I really had the curiosity, as I was coming to this part of the country anyway, to go to you and see what it was."

The man who had been mending the horse-rake having gone into the barn, Chap and Mr. Alexander Muller seated themselves on the log, and the former told the whole story of the trouble about

the mortgage, and of Mr. Berkeley's note, and of the present search after him.

"These things are no secret," said Chap; "and, as I know you want to find Mr. Godfrey, perhaps you will help us. And if you can't do that you may be of good in some other ways. For money must be raised, if Mr. Berkeley isn't found soon, and if you tell what you know about the treasure on the sunken ship, perhaps some one will advance some funds."

Mr. Muller smiled, and then he said,—

"I wish very much to see Mr. Berkeley, but, from what you tell me, there must be other people who wish to see him even more than I do. I imagine it will be of no use for me to go over to his place just now."

"It might be of a great deal of use," said Chap, "especially if you would see the lawyers and Mr. Welford, and tell them a part, at least, of what you know."

Mr. Muller laughed and shook his head.

"I shan't open my business before any of those people," he said. "You will understand when all is revealed. But I expect to be in this part of the country for some time, and if I get on Mr. Berkeley's track I'll help to find him."

"That would be capital," cried Chap. "You must be good at that sort of thing."

"Oh, splendid!" said Mr. Muller.

"And if you should find him," said Chap, "don't forget to tell him all about the mortgage affair; and let him know that if he doesn't hurry home he might as well stay away altogether, for everything he has will be sold. And now I must get on. I've been here too long."

Bidding Mr. Muller a hasty good-by, Chap mounted Kit and rode rapidly away. A short distance above this barn-yard the road turned to the right towards the main road, which it joined about half a mile away; but it also branched just here a little to the left, and Chap, who was riding very fast, and whose mind was full of the interview with the man with the black straw hat, did not notice the right-hand turn, but kept on the branch road to the left, which led down into a wide valley and joined the main road at last three miles farther on. Chap made no more stops for information, and when, after a hard gallop, he reached the junction with the main road, he thought it was the point at which he had agreed to meet Phil, although it was in reality several miles beyond.

Phil, on his road, heard nothing of any solitary traveller, and he became convinced that unless Chap had found some clue, the sooner they retraced their steps and tried some other track the better.

He kept on, however, to the point of meeting, and was not surprised at not seeing Chap, for he expected to have to wait for him, as his friend was a great fellow for having long discourses with people.

The road here was bordered on both sides by thick woods, and there was not a house in sight. Phil had learned from his uncle how to hobble a horse, which he now proceeded to do, and allowed Jouncer to graze on the plentiful grass by the roadside.

Then he thought he would try and get a shot at something with Old Bruden. He was sure the gun was loaded, although he had forgotten that fact when he started with it in the morning, and it would be a good thing to get the loads out of it, which might as well be done by shooting something as in any other way.

Perhaps he could get a crack at some big bird in these woods. He tried both barrels with the ramrod, and found they each contained a very heavy load. He had forgotten who last loaded the gun, but supposed it was some of Chap's work, who believed in plenty of powder and shot.

He then put on a couple of caps and strolled about for some little time, but found nothing to shoot at. Returning to the junction, he leaned the gun against a tree and gazed down the other

road, hoping to see Chap coming. Then, as he walked about, whistling, his attention was attracted by an apple hanging on a tree near the road.

Years before, there had been a house in the little clearing here, and there were a few old apple-trees still growing about the spot.

Phil could not find anything to throw at this apple, which looked as if it was ripe enough for a boy, but it was not far above him, and might be hooked down. He thought of the ramrod of the gun, and getting it, soon jerked the apple from its twig.

It was not a very good apple, but Phil ate it with relish, and thought he would very much like to have another. There was no more fruit on that tree, and so, ramrod in hand, he went rambling about looking for another tree and another apple.

When Emile Touron left Hyson Hall, there was a good deal remaining of the long summer afternoon, and as he knew he would have to pay for the horse for the whole day, he determined to get all the good out of him that he could. Besides, he felt too angry to go back to his lodgings. He would rather be alone and have a horse to shout at and cut with a whip. As for eating, he had forgotten all about it.

Instead, therefore, of turning into town, he drove

along the road which led to the north, and which Phil and Chap had taken that morning. He drove rapidly, and did not intend to return to town until he had had a good day's use of the horse.



CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF FAST TRAVELLING.

MEANTIME Philip was wandering about the edge of the woods, with a ramrod in his hand, looking for an apple-tree.

As there could be no such trees in the woods except those that had been planted around the house,—which had disappeared so long ago that even the clearing in which it had stood had grown up,—it is not to be supposed that Phil's search could be crowned with much success; but still he kept on, peering about the trees and bushes until he had wandered some distance from the junction of the roads.

It was at this time that Emile Touron, driving northward in the grocer's buggy, had nearly reached the point which Phil had appointed for the meeting of Chap and himself.

Seeing a horse grazing by the roadside, Emile drew up, and then stopped. Looking at the horse intently, he recognized him as Jouncer, of whom he had made several careful studies during his visit to Hyson Hall.

Apprehension of danger immediately seized him. If that horse were here, the boys could not be far off.

He turned his buggy in the road, the wheels making but little noise in the soft dust, and was about to drive back again, when he caught sight of Phil's gun leaning against a tree. Farther up the road he saw Phil—some two or three hundred feet away, with his back towards him.

Drawing up the horse, Emile threw the reins around the dashboard, stepped lightly from the buggy, and stealthily approaching the tree, he seized the gun. Raising the hammers, he saw that the gun was capped, and ready to fire.

Now he felt like another person. Seeing neither Chap nor his horse, he quickly concluded that that individual had gone away somewhere, and that Phil was waiting for him. He had been afraid to meet his armed enemies, but now the tables were turned. All his rage and vindictiveness boiled up afresh, and, going out into the road, with the gun in his hand, he gave a yell.

Phil instantly turned, and stood astounded.

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"Ha ! ha !" cried Emile. "Now I have you ! I can shoot you like one dog, if I choose. Now, you beg my pardon for what you haf done, or I will blow your head off!"

Whether Phil heard these words or not it is impossible to say, but certain it is that he did not heed them. Brandishing his ramrod, he rushed towards Emile. He felt sure that the latter was merely trying to frighten him, and he did not intend to be frightened. He did intend, however, to take that gun from him.

But he did not know the French boy's nature. Surprised at Phil's temerity, Emile again shouted to him, saying that if he did not stop he would certainly fire, at the same time cocking both barrels, and raising the gun to his shoulder. His threat was not an idle one. Phil approached so furiously, brandishing his ramrod, that Emile would not have dared to let him come near him. He was much less afraid of the consequences, if he fired, than of Phil's attacking him, and being assisted in a moment, perhaps, by Chap. He had found out before that Phil, though a smaller boy than himself, was a tough fellow to handle. And now he carried a weapon of some kind. He quickly made up his mind to warn Phil again, and then, if he did not stop, to fire. Angry as he was, he did not wish to kill the boy, and determined to

fire at his legs. He did not think of the legal consequences of such an act, nor that the report of his gun would probably make his horse run away. There was nothing in his mind but mingled rage and fear.

“Stop!” he cried; but Phil did not stop.

It may be supposed that no boy would have the courage to run forward thus in the face of a loaded gun, but Phil had not the slightest idea that Emile would dare to fire.

Hurriedly aiming the gun below Phil’s body, Emile pulled one trigger. As he did so, the thought flashed through Emile’s mind that if he did not hit the young rascal at first, this would show him that he was in earnest. As the hammer came down, the cap exploded with a loud snap, but the gun did not go off.

Phil stopped short and turned pale. Was the fellow really going to kill him? In another instant he would have turned and fled to the shelter of the woods, but Emile, frightened at his failure, and reckless of what he was doing, aimed the gun at Phil’s head, and pulled the other trigger. Again there was a snap, but no report.

The color rushed back into Phil’s face at this second miss-fire. The gun was harmless now, and again he dashed at Emile, but the latter instantly turned and ran for his buggy, carrying the gun.

He did not drop it, because he was afraid that Phil would use it against him.

Phil was after him in hot haste, but Emile reached the buggy first, and springing in, shouted to the horse. The animal was already getting restive, having his head turned homeward, and immediately started away.

Phil got near enough to the buggy to make a grasp at the hinder part of it, but Emile had seized the reins and whip, and at this instant giving the horse a cut, the animal sprang away, and the buggy was soon out of Phil's reach and whirling rapidly towards town.

Phil stopped, and ran to Jouncer, hurriedly unhobbling him, determined to ride after that young rascal and denounce him to the authorities of the town. He forgot all about Chap. His only thought was to go after Emile.

But Chap had not forgotten himself. He had waited a good while at the upper junction, and at last had made up his mind that Phil must have been detained at some house below, and that he would ride down and meet him. It was of course impossible that he should have passed the junction. So it happened that just as Phil was about to start, Chap came galloping along on Kit.

As quickly and clearly as possible under the circumstances, Phil told his friend what had hap-

pened, and the two started off on a gallop down the road.

Chap was very angry, and deeply deplored the fact that he had not arrived a few minutes sooner. Nothing but a State's prison would stop this French boy's atrocities. And now he had actually stolen a gun! This was enough, even if nothing else could be proved. They could certainly shut him up now. Phil had about the same ideas, but he did not say so much.

Jouncer was a horse of great endurance, and was well fed every day, and he galloped bravely; but Kit had been out to pasture for a month or more, and doing no work had had no grain, and this swift pace, added to the previous travel of the day, soon began to tell upon him, and he weakened visibly.

"Chap," cried Phil, "we will have to hold up! Kit can't stand it. We shall kill him if we keep on."

They stopped, and it was evident that what Phil said was true. Kit was puffing and heaving at a terrible rate. The boys were now at least seven or eight miles from Hyson Hall, and it was plain that Kit could not get there that night.

Chap proposed that Phil should ride on after Emile while he went to the nearest house and stayed all night with the horse, but Phil was not willing to do this.

He felt that he ought to see for himself that Kit found comfortable quarters, and he was not certain that Jouncer ought to be galloped for the five miles that lay between them and the town, and gallop he certainly must to overtake that French boy, who would have no pity for his horse.

So the two companions went slowly onward, leading Kit, until they came to a house where Phil had stopped earlier in the day, and where the people agreed to keep the boys and the horses for the night.

"I should feel worried about things at home," said Phil, "if I didn't know that Joel will be back before dark, and that Susan will make him and his mother come up to the house to sleep. They did that once before, when uncle and I were away for a night."

Emile certainly had no mercy on the horse he drove. He had looked back when he reached the top of a rise in the road, and had seen the boys riding after him, and he believed they were still in pursuit.

He was afraid to throw away the gun for fear they would pick it up, and if they got it he felt sure they would shoot him. He knew they must have ammunition with them, for he had seen the powder-horn and shot-flask tied to Jouncer's saddle.

When he neared the town he felt almost sure he had distanced them, and he slackened his pace, but he found no opportunity of getting rid of the gun. Here and there he met people returning from their work, and although dusk was coming on, it was by no means dark enough for him to throw away a gun without attracting observation.

But he felt he must get rid of it. No one must see it in his possession. If he could hide it until after dark he would throw it into the river.

When he entered the town, he drove up a side street to his tavern, and stopped before he reached the corner of the main street on which the house fronted. There was a back door open, and no one was to be seen in this part of the premises. With the gun in his hand, Emile slipped quietly into the house and ran up-stairs to his room without meeting any one. There he laid Old Bruden between the two mattresses of his bed, and came down-stairs again. Jumping into the buggy he drove round to the grocer's, delivered up the horse and buggy, and paid for their hire.

Then he walked into the tavern and made inquiries about supper. While waiting for this meal his mind became greatly troubled. Those boys would certainly be along directly, and they might have him arrested. The house was now lighted up, and people were going about. He was afraid

he would have no chance very soon to get that gun out of the house.

Then a thought struck him. Perhaps the gun was not loaded after all, and in that case he could assert that he was only trying to frighten Phil. He ran up-stairs, locked the door, and took the gun from the bed. There was no ramrod in it, but Emile had a long thin switch which he had cut for a walking-stick, and with this he measured the outside of the barrels and then the inside. The gun was certainly loaded, and he had no means of getting the loads out.

With a sickening feeling of fear he put Old Bruden back between the mattresses, smoothed the bedclothes, and went down-stairs. Then he walked over to the railroad station and asked when the next train would start for New York.

The ticket agent told him that the only train for New York that evening was due in a few minutes; in fact, it was coming then.

Emile hesitated but a minute, and then he bought a ticket, and when the train arrived he stepped on board. He had had nothing to eat since breakfast, but he would buy something on the road. As for his baggage he would telegraph for that, or he would abandon it altogether.

His fear had now gained such power over him that he was impatient and restless because the train



**With a sickening feeling of fear he put Old Bruden back
between the mattresses**

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did not start the moment he entered it. The two minutes' stop seemed like a quarter of an hour to him. But at last it moved away.

He did not go to New York that night, but stopped at a large town, got his supper and slept there, and then early in the morning he went on. This course would be wise, he thought, in case they should telegraph after him.



CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. GODFREY BERKELEY IS HEARD FROM.

WHEN the boys arrived at Hyson Hall the next morning—for Phil thought it better to go home before continuing the search for his uncle—they found great trouble there.

Joel had not returned at all, and Susan, not knowing what had happened to him or the boys, was in sore distress. Phœnix had been obliged to go home at dark, and she had sat up all night. She had determined to send Jenny to the neighbors in the morning, but when day broke she had formed a different plan.

The boys might be ever so far away, looking for Mr. Berkeley, and there ought to be some one there who would attend to things. She was afraid that Joel had gone off and got drunk.

There had been times when he had done this thing, and she could imagine no other reason for

his staying away and sending no message. So she resolved to send Jenny to her father to ask him if he could not come to Hyson Hall, to stay a day or two until things were straightened out. She could not be left alone another night.

After a very early breakfast, Jenny had walked to town and taken the train for a station within a mile of her father's house. Susan was rejoiced to see the boys, but was not surprised to hear them say that they must start off again after breakfast. But they did not start off again.

When Phil heard of Joel's continued absence, he made up his mind that they would not leave home until either Joel or Jenny's father should arrive; but he must ride back to town to give information in regard to Emile.

They had passed by the town so early that morning that he thought Mr. Harrison—the lawyer to whom he intended to make his complaint—was probably still in bed.

As soon as possible he started off, leaving Chap behind in charge of the stock and other farm affairs, with special injunctions to take good care of Kit and get him in condition for another trip on the morrow.

Chap determined that Kit should be well fed that day, but when he went to the grain-bins he was surprised to find them all empty. Kit and

the two work-horses had to get along as well as they could on hay and a little corn which Chap found in the corn-house.

When Phil reached Mr. Harrison's office he introduced himself,—for that gentleman did not know him,—and then told the tale of Emile's attempting to shoot him, and of his stealing his gun; also relating what Susan had told him of Emile's conduct at Hyson Hall.

Mr. Harrison listened quietly, and then asked,—

“Were there any witnesses to young Touron's attempt on your life?”

“No, sir,” said Phil; “my friend did not get there until it was all over.”

“And he did not see Touron go away with the gun?”

“No,” said Phil; “but he saw the buggy far up the road, and he knew the French boy had the gun, because I told him so.”

Mr. Harrison smiled.

“I am afraid you cannot make out much of a case without witnesses,” he said, “and as I have heard of other troubles at your place in which Touron fared very badly, it would not do to begin proceedings with nothing to back them but your assertions. However, I will look into the matter further, but I will first mention that I have just heard from Mr. Markle, who is the Tourons' lawyer, that

he has received a despatch from New York, in which young Touron states that he was obliged to leave this town on account of a conspiracy against his safety ; and also states that his father desires instant despatch in settling up this foreclosure business. As he is his father's accredited agent, Mr. Markle feels bound to obey his instructions, and I see nothing to prevent the Hyson Hall property passing out of the hands of its present proprietors. I have investigated the matter thoroughly, and find there is quite a large sum due the holder of the mortgage. As there seems no money to pay this, nothing remains but to sell the place, since Touron is so determined to push matters."

"I suppose all that will happen," said Phil, mournfully, "unless I can soon find my uncle. But it is all stuff about a conspiracy against Emile Touron. He ran away because he was afraid I would inform against him."

"That may be," said Mr. Harrison ; "but I don't see how it is to be proved. Suppose we walk round to the place where he lodged and ask some questions there."

Mr. Harrison and Phil went to the tavern, and were there informed by the proprietor himself that Mr. Touron had come in from a drive the evening before, had taken the horse and buggy to the place where they had been hired, and had

then walked to the tavern and asked if supper was ready.

In reply to Mr. Harrison's questions, the tavern-keeper said he was certain young Touron had no gun with him, because he would have been sure to notice it, and he also asserted that there was no gun in Touron's room; because, having received a message from Mr. Markle, informing him that Touron had been obliged to leave town suddenly, and requesting him to take care of his effects, he had gone up to his lodger's room and packed all his belongings into his valise, which he intended to keep until his bill was paid. There was no gun in the room.

Phil and Mr. Harrison then went down to the grocer's house, and were there assured that no gun had been in the buggy when it was brought home the evening before.

"Now," said Mr. Harrison to Phil, when they went out on the street, "it is quite clear that young Touron did not bring a gun to town with him. Therefore, if your story is correct, the only thing he could have done with it was to throw it away on the road. I am willing to do everything I can to help you prove what you assert, and I will send my clerk on a horse to make search along the road over which Touron passed. He can also ask questions of the people who live on the road. Perhaps

some of them have found the gun. You can go with him, if you like, and help him look for the gun, as well as show him how far along the road to go."

Phil and Mr. Harrison's clerk soon rode off together, and the road from the town to the place where Phil had waited for Chap was thoroughly searched.

There were not many bushes by the fences, but all these were well looked into, and the people at the houses were questioned, but no gun was found, and no one had seen a gun by the roadside or in the fields.

The afternoon was half gone when Phil rode mournfully home, and the clerk returned to make his report to Mr. Harrison.

When Phil reached Hyson Hall he found Joel. The latter had not been drunk, but had had trouble. He had gone much farther than he had expected, and had been obliged to stay away all night. He had not considered this a matter of much consequence, for he supposed Phil and Chap would be at the house, and that they could attend to the barn affairs for one night at least.

The milking was always done by Jennie and Joel's mother. But he had not been able to get any hands at all. Disengaged men were very few, and those he saw were not willing to come to a

place where they probably would not be paid for their work. Everybody seemed to have heard of the troubles at Hyson Hall, and to know that the house and everything on the place would soon be sold by the sheriff.

He had also tried at several places to buy some oats, for those ordered from Trumbull's had not come, but nobody would sell him any except for cash.

Phil could not help thinking that Joel ought to have told him some time before that they were so nearly out of oats, but he did not find any fault with the man. He seemed to have managed matters so badly himself that he had not the heart to blame anybody else.

"I guess we will have to turn the horses out to grass," he said, "until they are sold." And then he went to the house.

Towards evening Helen Webster came to see her brother and Phil. She had expected to be there sooner, but her mother had wished to come with her, and so the visit was deferred; but there seemed to be no time when there was not something which Mrs. Webster ought to do, and at last Helen had come by herself.

She told the boys of her visit to Mr. Welford, which was the first they had heard of it, and was much surprised to find that Phil had not received

a letter from the banker entirely exonerating him from the charges that had been made.

“He ought to have written to you right away!” said Helen, indignantly; “to tell you that he had found out that the things he had said about you were not true. He was quick enough to write when he had fault to find.”

Phil was very much comforted by Helen’s account of her visit to Mr. Welford. He did not think much would come of it, but it pleased him to know he had some one to speak for him.

“I am ever so much obliged to you and your mother,” he said; “but I think Mr. Welford won’t be in any hurry to say he was mistaken. These people don’t believe you when you go to them and tell them the plain truth.”

And then, to prove his position, he gave Helen a full account of all that had recently happened.

Helen was much affected by what Phil told her. She was already so much incensed against Emile Touron that she could find little more to say about him except that he was the most wicked person she knew of, and that he certainly ought to be put in prison. Her grief at the probable sale of Hyson Hall was very great.

“To think of this beautiful place being taken away from your family,” she said, “and given to those horrible French people! It is too dreadful!

If my father were rich I would get him to come and buy the place, and then your uncle could buy it back whenever he chose."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Chap; "but father couldn't do it. There isn't anybody about here who could bid against those Tourons. They are rich people, and they want this place."

"But isn't there any way of raising money?" asked Helen, anxiously.

"Yes," said Chap, "there is a way, and the thing ought to have been done long ago. That wreck down there——"

"Now, look here, Chap," interrupted Phil, "it's of no use to talk about that wreck. Even if there is any treasure in it, we couldn't get at it without first spending a lot of money, and that is what we haven't got. No, Helen," he continued, "there isn't any way of raising money that I can see. There isn't anything I could sell, except some horses and cows, and they wouldn't bring anything like enough. Besides, I haven't any right to sell uncle's property, even to pay his debts."

"No," said Chap; "and if you were to do anything of that kind your uncle would come along next day and make a jolly row about selling his stock for half-price."

"Couldn't you take boarders?" suggested Helen. "That is a splendid way to make money in the

summer-time, and this house is big enough to hold ever so many of them."

"That would be capital!" cried Chap. "I'd just like to stay here, Phil, and help you run a boarding-house. I could ride over the country and buy up butter and eggs."

"And bring them home all mixed together," said Helen, laughing. "I don't think you would make much of a manager, Chap, if the people were at all particular."

"Now, Helen," said Chap, "you know I am very particular."

"There is no use arguing about that," interrupted Phil. "We couldn't get any boarders to come here. They'd be afraid they'd be sold with the rest of the property."

"Don't talk that way, Phil," said Helen. "It sounds awful."

The party was now joined by Phoenix.

"I didn't know whether I'd find you at home or not," he said to Phil; "but I came over to see. Sorry I couldn't stay last night, for I left Susan in a dreadful stew. Didn't find your uncle, I suppose?"

"No," said Phil.

He was about to begin an account of his adventures the day before, when Phoenix pulled a letter out of his pocket and handed it to him.

"I was in town this afternoon," he said, "and the people in the post-office gave me this to bring to you. It is a drop letter, and must have been put in yesterday. They said they saw you in town, but guessed you must have forgotten to stop at the office."

"I did forget," said Phil, as he took the letter. Glancing at the address, his face brightened. "It's from uncle!" he exclaimed.

"Good! good!" cried Helen, clapping her hands. "Now everything will be all right! I felt sure all the time that something good would happen!"

Phil tore open the envelope and took out the note it contained. It was very short, and he read it aloud. He had no secrets from his friends. This was the note:

"You have grieved me to the heart. I expected to be with you for a time to-day, but little did I suppose I should be met with an insult—for it was nothing less—before I set foot on my own land. I don't wish to see you for the present, and I cannot say when you will hear from me again. G. B."

Phil stood; pale, with the letter in his hand, and said not a word. Helen burst into tears.

"That is too cruel!" she said. "What does he mean?"

Chap's face flushed, and he clinched his fist.

"Do you suppose," he said to Phil, "that he got

his back up in that way because you didn't send the gun to him?"

But Phil made no answer. He still stood with his eyes fixed on the floor. This was the most cruel blow he had ever received, and it stunned him.

Phoenix said nothing, but his mind was filled with an earnest wish that he had not stopped at the post-office.

"Chap," said Phil, directly, in a husky voice that did not seem like his own, "I won't bother you to stay here to-night, but I would like you to come round in the morning. Good-by, all!"

And he went into the house with the letter in his hand.

Helen and the two boys walked down the porch-steps without a word. But when they were some distance from the house, Chap suddenly stopped and shook his fist.

"The fellow that ought to have his head punched worst of all," he cried, "is that uncle!"

Half an hour later Phil was sitting gloomily on the porch, looking over the fields, when a man came through the hall and out of the front door to speak to him.

"I am Jenny's father," said the man. "She said you were a little hard pushed and needed help, and so I came over with her."

Phil rose and looked up at the person addressing him. To his surprise, he recognized him as the man who had held his horse on the day he had violated a town ordinance by tying Jouncer to a tree. The man recognized him also.

"Hello!" he cried. "So you are young Hyson, are you? I've heard a good deal about you, but never knew who you were before. I suppose you haven't been tying any more horses to trees lately?"



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GROCER'S BUGGY ONCE MORE.

JOHN MORGAN, Jenny's father, was a very sensible, practical man, and he had, besides, a genial and kindly humor which had a good deal of effect that evening in quieting and comforting the troubled soul of poor Phil.

The two sat together for an hour or more after supper, talking over the various affairs connected with the farm. Phil felt so utterly crushed by his uncle's note, which to him seemed so hard and undeserved, and which, coming at such a time, was doubly severe in its effect, that at first he took no interest in such matters.

But John Morgan knew of the boy's troubles, having had very full accounts of them from Jenny, though, indeed, nothing had been said to him of Mr. Berkeley's letter, and, seeing what a melan-

choly mood he was in, he thought the best way to comfort him was to talk of every-day matters in as cheerful and hopeful a way as possible.

He told Phil that as his harvest was over, and as his two older boys could attend to the work on his place, he would stay here and give his help until other arrangements could be made.

He had been talking with Joel, and knew pretty well what ought to be done. He knew of a man who would come to him, and with this assistance he and Joel would get in the wheat crop. As for feed for the stock, and whatever else of the kind was needed on the place, he would see that it was supplied, and when the wheat was threshed, everything could be paid for.

Although these were the least of Phil's troubles, it was some satisfaction to know that the farm affairs would be made all right.

John Morgan also spoke about the mortgage and Mr. Berkeley's absence ; and, although he could not say anything about either of these things which could give any real encouragement, it was pleasant to Phil to be talked to by a man who was both sensible and sympathetic.

The next day Chap came around and proposed that they should set off again in the search for Mr. Berkeley, but Phil would not consent. If his uncle was so angry with him that he did not want

to see him, he did not feel like forcing himself upon him.

He felt besides that they could not find his uncle now. There had been some chance, indeed, when they started off before ; but by this time his uncle was probably hundreds of miles away. He had no doubt dropped the note into the post-office just before he left town.

The next day was Sunday, and on Monday morning Phil rose with a feeling that something must soon happen to put an end to this strange state of affairs. From what Mr. Harrison had told him, he supposed that legal proceedings would begin with the beginning of the week. What would happen to him if the place were sold he did not know. His uncle was his nearest relative, and he did not seem to count for much just now. Perhaps he would go and stay with Chap for a time, until something turned up. He could certainly do work enough to pay for his board. At any rate, it was too doleful a thing to walk about the place and talk of his misery, so he took off his coat, and went out into the field to help the men bind the sheaves.

Chap, like a good fellow, took off his coat also, and went out to help his friend. Binding wheat, he declared, was one of the jolliest sports in the world. He would have preferred, however, to go to work upon the old wreck, and get money

enough to do away at once with all the troubles that hung over Hyson Hall. But it was of no use to talk to Phil of anything of that kind now.

While the boys were at dinner that day, Susan was standing on the front porch in a very disconsolate mood. The whole household, indeed, felt the shadow of the coming troubles, and no one, except John Morgan, made even an attempt to be cheerful. Susan had many reasons for feeling badly. She pitied Phil very much, and her conscience reproached her for having treated him so unkindly immediately after his uncle went away. But not only did she grieve that the Berkeleys should lose their home, but she was sorry on her own account. For many years Hyson Hall had been her home, and she had expected it to be such for many years to come. Her depression was greatly increased by the loss of Old Bruden. Now that the Tourons had possession of the master's gun, the matter in her mind was pretty well settled.

While thinking over these things, she heard the sound of approaching wheels. Looking up, she saw the grocer's buggy and the grocer's horse coming towards the house. Her heart fell within her. It actually made her sick to think that anybody—unless, indeed, it should be Mr. Godfrey Berkeley—should come to that house. Visitors

meant trouble. This could not be the French boy coming back? No; it was two gentlemen.

She went into the dining-room to tell Phil of the approaching visitors. Chap jumped up and looked out of the window.

“Borden and Tousey’s horse and buggy!” he exclaimed; “but I don’t know the men. They are a couple of solemn-looking coves.”

Phil rose from the table, a little pale.

“Of course it’s the sheriff, or some of them,” he said. “I supposed they’d come along to-day. Mr. Harrison told me that old Touron had given orders to foreclose immediately.”

“What do they do?” asked Chap, a little nervously. “Do they turn you right out, neck and heels?”

“All I know about it,” said Phil, “is that when a place has been mortgaged, and the money that ought to have been paid hasn’t been paid, the people that hold the mortgage have the matter closed up, and the sheriff sells you out. Then, if these money-lenders want your property, they buy it themselves; and after the sheriff takes out what is due to them, and all other expenses, he gives you what’s left. But as things sell awfully cheap at sheriff’s sales, there generally isn’t anything left. Uncle told me about these things, and that’s what I remember of it.”

Phil made this rather long speech as he was walking nervously about in the dining-room, waiting till the visitors should get out of the buggy and come to the house.

He did not feel at all like going out to meet them. Very soon there were steps on the porch, and then a knock on the door. In a few moments Susan came to Phil, and told him that two gentlemen wanted to see him in the parlor.

"Shall I come with you?" whispered Chap.

"No," said Phil. "Perhaps you'd better not."

He felt that he could better bear it alone, and resolutely, but with a fast-beating heart, he entered the parlor.

In five minutes more he rushed back into the dining-room, his eyes sparkling, his face glowing. Seizing Chap by the arm, he exclaimed,—

"It isn't the sheriff at all! It's two of the steamboat men from the city. They've come to pay us for running the Thomas Wistar ashore. What they say we have earned will more than pay the Tourons' interest."

Then he dragged Chap, amazed and speechless, into the parlor.



CHAPTER XXV.

OLD BRUDEN MAKES AN IMPRESSION.

WHEN the grocer's buggy drove away from Hyson Hall it left two happy boys behind. A woman was soon added to the number of rejoicers, for Susan was told the great news, and Jenny, when she heard it, ran to the wheatfield to tell her father and Joel. The whole world seemed more cheerful to the people of Hyson Hall. The sun shone with great brightness, although this had been noticed before by the workers in the harvest-field.

Everything out-doors, as well as in-doors, seemed to have something bright and sparkling about it; and a fresh breeze sprang up, which, if the bells had still been hanging on the roof, would have added a merry peal to the rejoicing. But the bells were not there. Susan and Phœnix had taken them down soon after young Touron had made his precipitate retreat from the place.

The two gentlemen who came in the buggy were connected with the railroad company which owned the Thomas Wistar and other steamboats plying upon the river.

Full reports of the manner in which the boat had been run ashore had been given to the company; and now that everything of value had been taken from the Wistar, and a calculation had been made of the amount of the loss, and the value of the goods, machinery, etc., which had been saved, the two gentlemen had been sent to Boontown, to make arrangements for compensating the persons who had been instrumental in saving a portion of the boat and cargo.

Of these, the young fellows who had boarded the burning steamboat and had run her ashore deserved the principal portion of the salvage-money.

Both the gentlemen were acquainted with Mr. Welford, and they went first to his office to make inquiries in regard to Phil and his companions. Now it was that the good effect of Helen's visit to the banker began to show itself.

Had these gentlemen come to see Mr. Welford before Helen's warm defence of Phil had made the banker investigate, as far as he was able, the character and conduct of that young person, they would probably have heard that it would be ex-

tremely injudicious to put money into the hands of a boy who might spend hundreds of dollars in discharging old servants and in carrying on all sorts of wild and disorderly pranks in his uncle's house.

But Mr. Welford spoke in a very different vein. Instead of urging the officers of the company to delay the payment of Phil's portion of the salvage until the arrival of his uncle and guardian, he had advised a full and immediate payment of the money due, feeling sure that Phil would use it towards paying the interest on the mortgage. He did not know exactly how much would be necessary to stop the foreclosure proceedings, but hoped Phil's share would be sufficient.

The gentlemen admitted that the boys' services had been of great value. Had the Wistar floated on until the tide turned, she would have turned around with it, for her bow was more heavily loaded than her stern, and, in that case, the wind would have swept the flames over the whole vessel, and everything on board would have been consumed; or, if she had floated much longer, she would probably have burned sufficiently to have sunk in mid-channel. But the boys had prevented all that by bringing her into such an excellent moorage as Spatterdock Point.

When the two gentlemen talked to Phil in the

parlor of Hyson Hall, they made him understand how thoroughly the company appreciated the brave efforts of himself and companions to save their property, and named the sum which was considered their due.

They then asked the full names of the three boys to whom the money should be paid. Chap hereupon protested that none of the money was due him, for he was not on the Wistar at all, and did not do anything to help get her ashore.

“That’s nonsense!” cried Phil. “If you hadn’t stayed on the row-boat we wouldn’t have gone on the steamboat.”

“But if the fire had burst out under you,” said Chap, “it wouldn’t have hurt me. At any rate, you’ve got to have my share, and Phœnix will give you his, too, for if you don’t have it all, this place will be sold, Wistar or no Wistar.”

“Phœnix will have something to say about that,” said Phil.

It was finally agreed that a cheque for the full amount should be made out to Mr. Welford’s order and sent to him, and he and the boys could arrange as to the proportion each should receive. Then the gentlemen left.

“If Phœnix don’t give you every copper of his share,” said Chap, “he’ll get a worse thrashing than he gave Emily.”

"Who'll give it to him?" asked Phil.

"I will," replied Chap. "You needn't laugh. A fellow can do big things when he has justice on his side."

The boys did not go into the harvest-field again that afternoon. They both went over to the Poole place, to tell Phœnix the wonderful news.

"It pays better to run a wreck into the mud," said Phœnix, when he heard the story, "than to hoist one out of it."

"Now, look here," cried Chap, "it's no use talking that way. Just wait till our wreck is hoisted out of the mud!"

"All right," said Phœnix, "I'll wait."

When the matter of the division was talked of, Phœnix fully agreed with Chap to hand over the whole amount to Phil, and to wait for repayment until Mr. Berkeley's return. Phœnix, however, made one reservation: If there should be any money left over after the Tourons' claims had been fully paid, he would like to have a dollar and a quarter. He had lost his knife, and it would take that much money to buy him another like it. It was a dreadfully awkward thing to be without a knife. This was agreed to, and the matter was settled.

That evening, Mr. Alexander Muller came into Boontown, after a long walk. He determined to

stay in town for some days, and took lodgings at the tavern which young Touron had lately left. The room that Emile had occupied was given to him, and soon after supper he was glad to hang his black straw hat on the rack in the hall, and go up-stairs to bed.

But he did not sleep well. He had bad dreams. He dreamed that he was taking a journey by rail, but he did not travel in the ordinary way. Instead of being in a car which ran upon the track, he was lying at full length upon a rail, which was carried by two brakemen. This rail seemed much unlike other rails. It was not smooth and even, but was full of jagged points and knots and sharp bends, which ran into his back and made him very uncomfortable. He moved and wriggled about, but could not get on any part of the rail where it was smooth. He tried to fall off, but he found that this was impossible. So he went on and on, the brakemen sometimes stumbling and falling on their knees, which made the jagged points run into him worse than ever.

At last he woke up, and when his eyes were fully opened, he said to himself,—

“I never slept so uncomfortably in my life. My back aches as if it had been threshed with a flail. There must be something in this bed.”

He got up, struck a match, and lighted a candle.

He turned down the bedclothes, and then turned down the upper mattress, which was very thin. Under this he found a double-barrelled shot-gun. Mr. Muller was greatly astonished.

"No wonder I slept badly," he said, "lying on this thing."

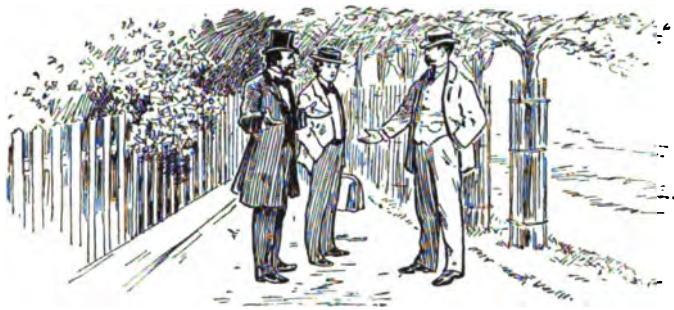
Then he took up the gun, and sat on the side of the bed, thinking. He had heard some talk that evening, at the supper-table, about a French boy who stole a gun from young Berkeley, and also attempted to shoot him. He knew that this was the room which had been occupied by a French boy, because the landlord had mentioned it when he accompanied him up-stairs. Naturally, therefore, he connected the gun with the story he had heard.

Since his interview with Chap Webster in the barn-yard, he had thought a good deal about the story the boy had told him of the troubles at Hyson Hall. He rather liked Chap, although he had been a good deal provoked at him when he read the postal-card which had made him an object of ridicule at his boarding-house in New York. He had never seen Philip Berkeley, but the fact of his having taken a good deal of trouble to restore him his black straw hat, by posting up a notice to its owner, and leaving it in a place where it could be conveniently called for, had im-

pressed him with the idea that Phil was a sensible and considerate boy. He felt willing, therefore, to do all he could to help the young fellow who was put to so much trouble by the absence of his uncle; and as he had, besides, a very strong desire on his own account to find Mr. Godfrey Berkeley, he had made a good many inquiries about that gentleman at the different places he had visited during the last few days, but had received no information whatever.

"I think," said he to himself, at last, "that I will put this gun back where I found it; but I won't put it across the bed, as it was before. There is room enough here for us both to lie very comfortably."

So he laid Old Bruden on the farther side of the bed, with its muzzle pointed a little outward, so that he should not be incommoded, in case it should choose to go off in the night. He could not find out whether it was loaded or not, because there was no ramrod to the gun, but he felt perfectly safe with its muzzle pointed away from him. He had often slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow.



CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. TOURON ATTENDS PERSONALLY TO HIS AFFAIRS.

THE next day but one after the visit of the two gentlemen to Hyson Hall, Mr. Touron, at his residence in New York, read in his morning paper a short account of the boys who had saved part of the cargo of a burning steamboat, by running her ashore. The name and residence of Philip Berkeley were given, and mention was made of the handsome sum he and his companions were to receive for their services.

The French gentleman instantly suspected the effect which this event would have upon himself. Philip Berkeley would pay off the interest on the mortgage, and Hyson Hall would not be sold by the sheriff nor bought by the Tourons.

“What slow and stupid dolts these country lawyers are!” said Mr. Touron, angrily, to him-

self. "That foreclosure should have been made a week ago, and the whole affair settled, and Mr. Markle should have bought the property in my name, as I directed him. I will go down there myself. There may be time yet to finish up the matter."

When Emile heard that his father was going to Boontown he asked that he might go with him. He had not told his father anything about the affair with the gun, having explained his sudden departure by saying that he had heard that he would be attacked by the boys from Hyson Hall if he stayed there any longer. But he had taken care to relate the treatment he had received from Phœnix Poole and Susan, and he hoped that, by his father's influence, these outrages might be made to offset the little affair on the road.

He also had a morbid desire to see if the gun were still between the mattresses of the bed. He would make some pretence to go to the room he had occupied, and if the gun were still there he would, at all hazards, get it away and drop it into the river.

Perhaps they would stay at Boontown all night, and then he would have a good chance. What he would do or say if he should not find the gun where he had left it, he did not consider.

When Mr. Touron and his son arrived at Boon-

town they found that they were in time. Mr. Harrison, who had heard of their arrival, hurried to Mr. Welford's office to know if the boys' money had been received.

But, although Phil and his two friends had been with Mr. Welford in the morning, and had arranged for the equal division of the salvage-money, with the proviso, which was agreed upon in writing by the parents of Chap and Phoenix, that all the money should for the present be placed at Phil's disposal, nothing had been heard from the railroad company. No cheque had been received.

There was nothing surprising in this, as such things are generally not done in great haste; but the delay, under the circumstances, was very unfortunate.

But Mr. Welford was anxious to do whatever he thought he ought to do in this matter, and he and Mr. Harrison went around to Mr. Markle's office, where the Tourons were.

Here there was soon a stormy scene. Old Mr. Touron would listen to nothing that Mr. Welford or Mr. Harrison said, and insisted that matters should be instantly settled.

He complained loudly of the treatment received by his son, and of the negligence and delay of Mr. Markle. At last Mr. Harrison spoke up.

"If you choose to press your affair," he said,

"perhaps we can also press something on our side."

He then told the story, which Phil had given him, of Emile's assault, and the theft of the gun.

Mr. Alexander Muller had heard of the arrival of the Tourons, and had strolled into Mr. Markle's office, where nobody seemed to notice his presence. Before Mr. Harrison had quite finished his story he went out.

"What you say to that?" asked Mr. Touron, of his son, when the lawyer had finished.

"It is not true!" said Emile. "It is all one vile tale!"

And he went on, at considerable length, to assert that this was only part of the persecution to which Phil and the other boys were subjecting him.

"What proof have you of the charge you make?" asked Mr. Touron of Mr. Harrison.

"We can bring forward the testimony of Philip Berkeley," said Mr. Harrison, "the boy whose life was threatened, and from whom the gun was taken. His character has been proved to be an excellent one, and I believe his testimony would be received by any jury in this county."

"It is not as good as zat!" cried Emile, snapping his fingers. "I can prove what he and ze ozers haf done to me, and my word will be as good as his."

“Excuse me for interrupting your conversation,” said Mr. Alexander Muller, who had re-entered the room a minute or two before, “but this gun which that young gentleman left between the mattresses of his bed, on the evening when he so suddenly went away from town, may be useful in proving the charge which Mr. Harrison has made.”

When Emile saw Old Bruden, he stepped back quickly, as if he were afraid of it. Then he suddenly exclaimed,—

“I know not’ing about zat gun! I never saw it before!”

“The tavern-keeper informs me,” continued Mr. Muller, “that no one but myself has occupied the room in which I found the gun since that young gentleman left it. He also asserts that this gun belongs to Mr. Godfrey Berkeley. He knows it very well. It has been in the neighborhood a long time. It is also, as you see, without a ram-rod, which corresponds with young Berkeley’s story, as Mr. Harrison has just told it. But I measured the barrels with a stick, and I find it is loaded, although neither barrel went off, and these two caps were snapped,” and he slightly raised the hammers, and showed the two split percussion-caps. “I can swear,” he added, “that this is the condition in which I found it.”

"I think," said Mr. Welford, who had carefully attended to everything that was going on, "that without any reference to the mortgage proceedings or anything else, we should get out a warrant against this young man. It is due to him, as well as to all parties concerned, that the case should be investigated before a justice of the peace. You must not think that we are trying to intimidate you," he continued, addressing Mr. Touron. "This matter, as I said before, has nothing to do with the other affair."

So saying, he left the office, accompanied by Mr. Harrison and Alexander Muller, the latter carrying Old Bruden carefully under his arm.

Mr. Touron leaned back in his chair and thought over the matter. He was very much afraid that this charge against Emile could be proved. He had no confidence in his son's word, and the matter was a very serious one.

Mr. Touron was a prudent man, and considered the subject carefully. In pressing the proceedings against Mr. Berkeley's estate, he did not wish to recover the money which was due him. He only desired that the place might be sold by the sheriff that he might buy it. He already owned property in Boontown, and had long wished to possess Hyson Hall, which he intended to make his summer residence.

He knew that if he turned the Berkeleys out of it in the way he proposed, it would make him unpopular in the neighborhood for a time; but he supposed that this feeling would soon pass away, and he did not care much about it. But if, almost at the same time that Hyson Hall was sold by the sheriff, his son should be brought to trial here on a charge that might send him to the penitentiary, his unpopularity might be a very serious thing.

A jury selected from this vicinity would not be likely to deal gently with Emile. He thought it better, therefore, to wait awhile before pressing the foreclosure matter, and see how things would turn out. In six months, more interest would be due on the mortgage, and he felt quite certain that there would be no money to pay it. Godfrey Berkeley would not have run away if he had not been bankrupt, and it was not at all likely that there would be another steamboat for the boy to save. In six months he could get the property without any trouble.

He therefore arranged with Mr. Markle that the foreclosure business need not be pressed for the present, and left the office with his son, intending to quietly take the first train for New York; but before he reached the station Emile was arrested, and taken before a justice of the peace.

Phil and Mr. Muller were sent for, and gave their testimony, and at the conclusion of the examination, Emile was required to give bail for his appearance in court early the next month. His father gave the required bail, and the two left town.

Of course, this affair created a great deal of talk in Boontown, and it interfered very much with the sleep of certain persons at Hyson Hall, and at the Webster and Poole farms.

As soon as the cheque was received the interest on the mortgage was paid, and the small sum remaining was divided among the three boys. Phoenix bought his knife, which he kept for a long time, and which he always called his Thomas Wistar.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LONELY SUMACH.

MR. ALEXANDER MULLER remained some days in Boontown, and for the greater part of the time he was quite busy with the affairs which brought him there. But there came a day in which he had nothing to do, and it struck him it would be a good idea to take a holiday, and have a long stroll in the woods. He was a good deal of a naturalist, and was very fond of woodland rambles.

When he left Mr. Markle's office, on the day of the Touron affair, he had taken Old Bruden back to the tavern, where he supposed Phil would call for it. But Phil's mind had been much occupied, and he had not thought of the gun. Mr. Muller determined, therefore, that he would walk down some evening to Hyson Hall, and carry Old Bruden home.

But when he decided to give himself a holiday,

he thought there could be no objection to his taking Old Bruden with him, especially as he intended afterwards to give himself the trouble to walk all the way to Hyson Hall to return it.

The thought came into his mind that it would be well perhaps to leave the gun in the condition it then was, as it might be used in the approaching trial of young Touron. But Mr. Muller had his own ideas about that trial, and he did not believe the gun would ever be needed. Besides that, he did not know of any other gun he could borrow, and he felt very much like having one with him, in case he should see anything he wished to shoot. He therefore bought a small quantity of powder and shot, and a box of caps; with these, and a luncheon in his pocket, and Old Bruden on his shoulder, he started for the Green Swamp. He had no ramrod for his gun, but he cut one from the first dogwood tree he met with.

He had never been in the Green Swamp, but he had heard a good deal about it, and he wished to explore it as far as possible. He wandered about the whole of the morning, finding a great many things to interest him in the way of mosses, ferns, and other specimens of woodland growth.

He found, also, that it would have been just as well if he had not brought Old Bruden with him, for he saw nothing at all at which he cared to take

a shot. There were no birds of any value, and although a rabbit occasionally jumped from its cover and went skipping away into the bushes, this was not the season to shoot rabbits.

Besides being entirely useless, Old Bruden was a real inconvenience to him, for it was necessary, in order to push his way into the heart of the woods, for him to cross wide expanses of swamp-lands, from which the place derived its name. He frequently had to make his way from one tussock of weeds and grass to another, and as the distance between these tussocks was sometimes four or five feet, and the intervening ground very wet and soft, he found that in making his long steps and jumps a heavy gun was very much in his way. But he had it with him, and there was nothing to do but to carry it along as well as he could.

After a time, he reached a stream of water, some eight or ten feet wide, which seemed to bar his way entirely. Had it been an ordinary stream, he might have waded across, but in a swampy place like this he did not know but he might sink up to his waist if he stepped into this apparently shallow piece of water; and to stick fast in the middle of this lonely wood did not at all suit his fancy. He sat down on a little piece of dry ground and ate his lunch, and then he determined

to find, if possible, some place where he could cross this brook.

The ground beyond seemed somewhat higher and drier, as if it were drained by this running stream. The bank on his side, too, afforded better walking than the swamp-land he had recently crossed.

He therefore pushed his way up the stream, hoping that he would come to a place where the banks would be near enough together and firm enough for him to jump across; but, though he walked a long distance, the stream did not seem to narrow.

At last he reached a place where the bushes grew quite thickly on either side, although he found little difficulty in pushing his way along.

Soon, to his great delight, he came to the trunk of a large tree that had fallen diagonally across the stream. It was not a very easy thing to walk on this log, but Mr. Muller stepped boldly on it, and using the gun as a balancing-pole, he got over without a slip. On the other side he found, as he had expected, good walking, with very little under-brush among the trees. Guiding himself by means of a pocket-compass toward what he supposed must be the centre of the wood, he trudged gayly onward.

Before long, he came to a space which was cov-

ered by low evergreens, and, above these, he could see at a distance a little knoll or hill. On the top of this knoll, the near side of which seemed rocky and almost bare of trees, there grew a tall bush, or little tree, on which he could here and there see a red leaf glowing in the sunshine. A short distance behind this bush the forest seemed to rise again, thick and shady.

"It is early for leaves to turn red," said Mr. Muller to himself. "That must be a sumach-bush," and he walked toward it.

Just as he reached the bottom of the little hill, he heard a stir in the tufted grass.

"What is that?" he thought, and instantly stopped and cocked his gun.

Old Bruden would have been freshly loaded if the dogwood ramrod had grown with a screw at the end, so that Mr. Muller could have drawn out the old loads. But he had sifted some powder into the nipples of the gun, and had put on fresh percussion-caps, and was content to fire out the old loads.

Something now quickly glided from the tuft, slipped rapidly over the ground in front of him, and disappeared in another thicket.

It was a large blacksnake, but it passed before him so suddenly and swiftly that Mr. Muller was not ready to fire at it. But he would be sure to

take a shot at it if it appeared again. He would be very glad to kill a large snake like that. He would take the skin home and stuff it. It would be quite a curiosity.

Mr. Muller stepped forward a few paces and stood ready, his eyes fixed upon the thicket. In half a minute the blacksnake appeared again, and rushed directly up the hill with that rapid motion peculiar to these reptiles.

Mr. Muller took good aim at him, and when he thought he had him well covered with the muzzle of his gun, he pulled the forward trigger. The cap snapped loudly, but there was no report.

Instead of that, a man's voice shouted,—

“What are you about?”

Utterly astonished, Mr. Muller looked beyond the point where the snake had been, and found that he was aiming his gun almost directly at a man who was lying on the ground in the shade of the tall sumach.

The snake had been on a little rise in the ground when he pulled the trigger, and if the gun had gone off, a great part of the charge would probably have struck the man, who was lying on the ground not many yards beyond.

The man, who had been reading, sprang to his feet, leaving his book wide open on the grass. He looked startled and angry, as well he might.

But before he could say or do anything, Mr. Muller hastened forward to explain.

“I was not aiming at you, sir. I was going to fire at a large snake that just passed near me.”

“But you ought to be more careful,” replied the other. “If your gun had gone off you certainly would have hit me.”

“I am generally very careful,” said Mr. Muller; “but who in the world could have imagined that a man would be lying on the ground in this lonely spot?”

“That is true, perhaps,” said the other; “and, on my part, I never could have imagined that anybody would come to this lonely spot to shoot snakes. And may I ask, sir, what you are doing with my gun?”

“Your gun!” exclaimed Mr. Muller, and for a moment he seemed stupefied, and then his face began to shine as if it had been lighted up from inside. “Are you Mr. Godfrey Berkeley?” he cried.

“Yes, I am,” said the other, shortly.

Mr. Muller laughed aloud.

“Why, I have been wanting to find you for ever so long! And who could have supposed I would stumble on you here?”

Mr. Berkeley now seemed quite annoyed and angry.

"You had no right to look for me, sir, whoever you may be! If I choose to seek quiet and privacy, no one is authorized to intrude upon me."

"I am sure, sir, I was not trying to intrude upon you this time, although I admit I have been inquiring for you in various places. I came here for sport and recreation, and I suppose these woods are as free to me as to any one else."

"Yes, they are," said Mr. Berkeley, "but I did not think that any one but myself would penetrate to this secluded spot. How did you get over the stream down there? The bottom is very soft."

"I found a fallen tree lying across it," said Mr. Muller.

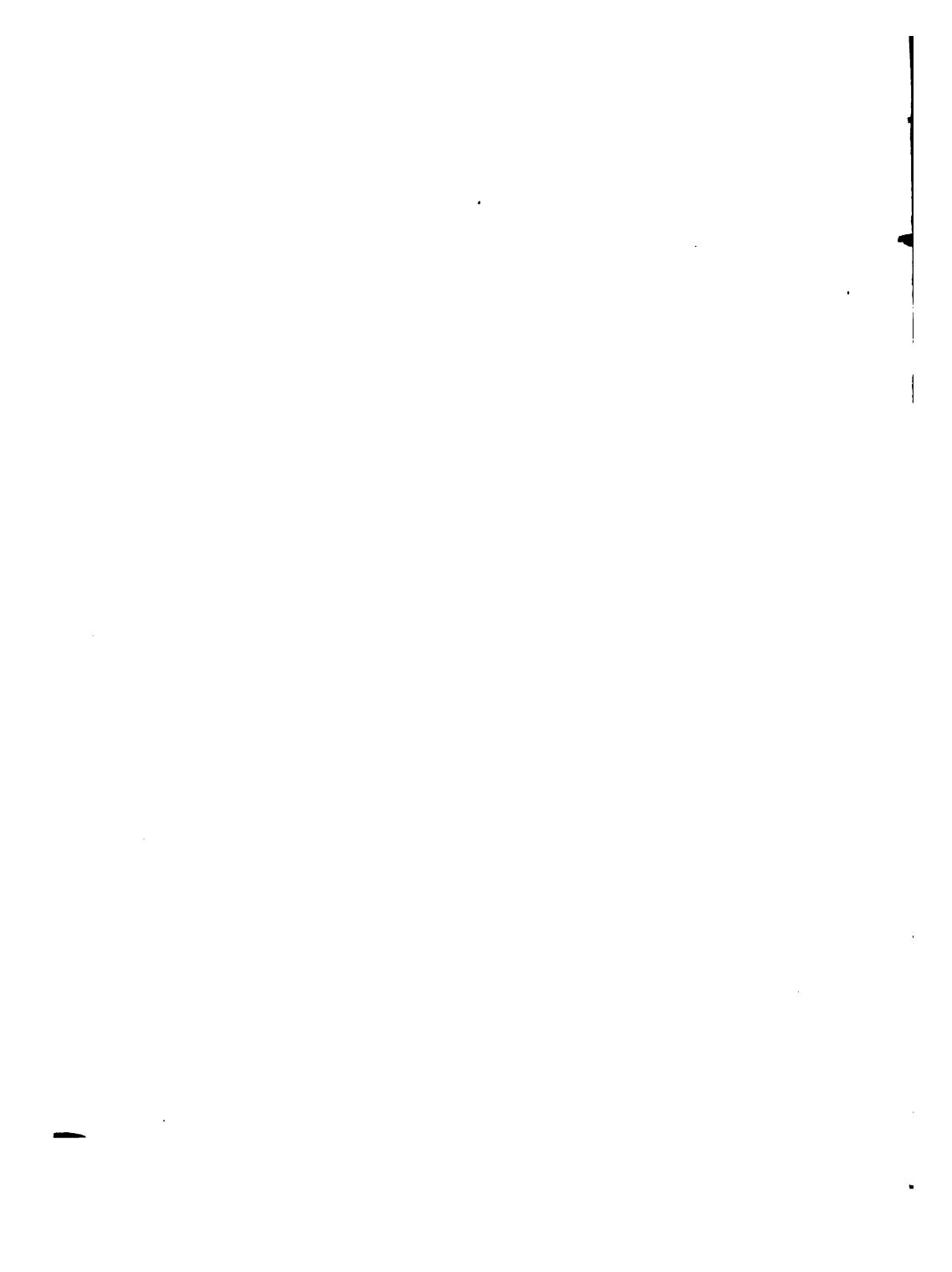
"You must have been very anxious to shoot snakes," remarked the other. "That fallen tree is surrounded by a thicket that I did not suppose any one would care to penetrate."

"I wished to explore the forest," said Mr. Muller, "and so pushed on toward its centre. And the way I happen to have your gun with me is this: I found it, a few nights ago, in the bed where I was sleeping, and where the Touron boy hid it, after he attempted to shoot your nephew, Philip Berkeley."

"What in the name of common sense are you



"You had no right to look for me, sir, whoever you may be!"



talking about?" cried Mr. Berkeley. "Shoot my nephew! Are you crazy?"

"No, I am not crazy," said Mr. Muller, very quietly, "and you need not alarm yourself. No one has been injured. If you will sit down here in the shade I will tell you the whole story. It is a long one, and I am rather tired."

The two then seated themselves in the shade of the sumach, and the man with the black straw hat told Mr. Godfrey Berkeley the story of the troubles at Hyson Hall as he had had it from Chap Webster; he also related the startling events which had since occurred.

These accounts greatly excited Mr. Berkeley. He frequently interrupted Mr. Muller with exclamations of astonishment, and when all was told, he sprang to his feet and exclaimed,—

"I must leave here instantly!"

"You need to be in no particular hurry," said Mr. Muller. "Everything is all settled now."

"Nevertheless, I must return immediately," said Mr. Berkeley, "and if you will wait a few minutes I will walk back with you."

So saying, Mr. Berkeley picked up his book and hurried to a group of large trees, which stood some distance back from the lonely sumach.

Mr. Muller followed him, and was much surprised to see him approach a neat little log hut,

which was quite concealed from the open ground by a clump of bushes.

Mr. Berkeley entered, and the other looked in at the door. There was a low bed on one side of the cabin. On a small table and a shelf were a number of books, in leather bindings, and a valise stood in the corner. Outside, by the door, were a few cooking utensils.

“Do you live here, sir?” asked Mr. Muller.

“Yes,” said Mr. Godfrey, who was busily putting a few things into his valise, “I have lived in this cabin for several weeks, and I expected to spend the rest of the summer here. I suppose you want to know why I have been leading this hermit life?”

“Of course I have no right to inquire,” said Mr. Muller, “but I am burning with curiosity.”

“I am so glad you found me,” said Mr. Berkeley, “although you did it accidentally, that I feel quite willing to tell you all about my coming here. I will do so as we walk through the woods.”

“I am also extremely glad I found you,” remarked Mr. Muller, who had said nothing yet about his own reasons for wishing to see Mr. Berkeley, preferring to wait until the mind of the other should not be so occupied and excited by the affairs of which he had just heard. “And

what is more," he continued, "I am greatly rejoiced that this gun did not go off."

"And I more than you," said Mr. Berkeley. "I knew Old Bruden could not be depended on for sure fire, but I never expected to derive any advantage from that fact. And now," added he, taking up his valise, and preparing to padlock the door of his hut, "I think we are ready to go."

"Do you intend to leave all those books here?" asked Mr. Muller, in surprise.

"Yes," said Mr. Berkeley, "I brought them here by degrees, and I can't carry them all away at once. Besides, I may want to come back here again. I think they will be quite safe, for I am certain that no one but you and myself has yet discovered that fallen tree among the bushes."

As the two walked away—the one carrying the gun and the other the valise—Mr. Berkeley told his little story.

"I came out here," he said, "to study law."

"To study law!" exclaimed Mr. Muller.

"Yes," said the other. "You need not be surprised, and you need not laugh. The idea is not original with me, and the thing has been done before. A young friend of mine read law for four months in that very hut, which he built. He approached it, however, by a difficult path through

the woods, not knowing of our convenient bridge. He came for the same reason that I came,—to study undisturbed. His provisions were brought to him on certain days by his brother, who left them under a tree more than a mile from here, where my friend went to get them. His brother never knew where the hut was situated. I go over to the little village of Bridgeville for my provisions. It is a long walk, but I don't have to go often."

"But I cannot understand why *you* should come here," said Mr. Muller, to whom the idea of a man owning a fine house and choosing to live in a little hut like that seemed utterly absurd.

"When I was a young man," said Mr. Berkeley, "I studied law, but soon tired of it. Lately, since I have determined to settle down to a quiet life, I have tried farming; but I do not think I succeed very well as a farmer. I lose more money than I make."

Here Mr. Muller gently rubbed his hands together, as if the remark pleased him.

"I recently determined to take up law again," said Mr. Berkeley, "and began to read at home; but there were so many things there to distract me, and continually to distract my mind, that I found it impossible to study. I therefore decided to follow my young friend's example, and betake myself to the woods. I found his house in good

order, and soon made it quite habitable. Of course, I allowed no one to know where I had gone, as, otherwise, I would have been bothered almost as much as if I had stayed at home. I would like you to understand," continued Mr. Berkeley, "that I have good reasons for wishing to study law,—especially a particular branch of it. There are large tracts of land in the West, which were acquired by grants and purchases by my grandfather, to which I know I have a legal right. It is to make myself able to investigate the title to these lands, and to prosecute my claims to them, that I wish to become master of the laws concerning such matters. I am not a rich man, and I have every desire to better my fortunes."

"A very laudable desire, truly," said Mr. Muller; "and I hope to be able to—— But no matter about that now. Don't let me interrupt you, sir."

"Of course I had no idea," continued Mr. Berkeley, "that when I went away there would be any money troubles at Hyson Hall. Mr. Touron, who is a relative by marriage, has repeatedly assured me that I need give myself no concern about the payments on the mortgage that he holds, if at any time it should be inconvenient for me to make them. He never before even asked for his interest, and I intended in the fall,

when I generally go to New York, to have a settlement with him, but I did not imagine he would make any trouble when I was absent."

"Perhaps that is the very reason he tried to foreclose," said Mr. Muller. "He probably thought you would never turn up again, and the chance was too good to lose."

"That may be very true," said Mr. Berkeley. "But tell me more about this young Touron. He is the son of the old man's first wife, but I had almost forgotten his existence."

Mr. Muller then proceeded to tell all he had heard about Emile, and related how, in addition to his more serious offences, he had gone to Hyson Hall and cut up all sorts of didos, such as hanging a lot of bells on the roof, threatening the housekeeper, and he knew not what else besides.

Mr. Berkeley stopped short in his walk.

"Hung bells on the roof?" he said. "Are you sure of that?"

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Muller; "these things are quite the town talk. He found the house deserted one day, except by the women, and it seems he did pretty much as he pleased."

This statement seemed to affect Mr. Berkeley more than anything he had yet heard, and for some time he walked on without saying a word. When they reached the outskirts of the town, Mr.

Berkeley asked his companion if he still intended to go to Hyson Hall.

“Yes,” said Mr. Muller, “I proposed to take this gun there, and I also have something which I wish to say to you, and it may take some time to talk about it.”

“In that case,” said Mr. Berkeley, “I shall be very glad if you will go on to the house now. You must stay all night, and I will talk with you to-morrow. I wish to stop to see Mr. Welford, but would like to have a note reach my nephew before my arrival.”

Mr. Muller consented to this arrangement, and Mr. Berkeley, writing a short note in pencil on a piece of paper which he tore from a blank-book, directed it to Phil, and gave it to his companion. The two then separated, Mr. Berkeley promising to be at Hyson Hall in time for supper.

“I hope that young Webster won’t be there,” thought Mr. Muller, as he trudged away,—“that is, if he has not forgotten the sunken treasure-ship and the three brothers.”

But Chap was there, and he had not forgotten.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RETURN OF THE RUNAWAY.

WHEN Phil Berkeley read the note that was brought to him by the man with the black straw hat, he gave a shout of joy which rang through the house.

“Read that,” he cried to Chap, who had been on the porch, making calculations on a piece of paper, and who now ran in to see what was the matter.

Chap seized the note and read:

“**MY VERY DEAR PHIL**,—From the bottom of my heart I beg your pardon for the cruel words I wrote you. It was all a mistake. I long to see you again, and shall be with you very soon after you read this.

“Your affectionate uncle,

“**GODFREY**.”

The joyful news spread rapidly over the place, and in ten minutes Joel was driving a light

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wagon toward town, to meet Mr. Berkeley and bring him home.

Never was prodigal uncle received more warmly. Phil, of course, was wild with joy. Even if Mr. Berkeley had not returned that day, the note he had received would have made him the happiest boy on earth.

Chap was a good deal more overjoyed than if one of his own uncles had arrived, and Susan's face had not been so radiant for many a year.

Even Mr. Muller, possessed with the pervading spirit, could scarcely resist welcoming Mr. Berkeley to Hyson Hall. But as he had not the slightest right to do so, he kept discreetly in the background and smiled his gratification.

During supper, and long after the meal was over, the talking, the questioning, and the explanations went on. There was so much to ask and to tell that there seemed to be no end to it all. Mr. Muller went to bed early, for he had done a great deal of walking that day. Chap would have been glad to sit up all night to talk and listen, but, after a time, he discreetly followed the example of Mr. Muller.

As he was about to pass the open door of the room which that gentleman occupied, he stopped and asked,—

“Are you asleep, sir?”

Mr. Muller felt very much inclined to say that he was, but instead of that he muttered that he was not quite asleep yet—just dropping off, he thought.

“I’ll not bother you now,” said the considerate Chap; “but to-morrow you’ll find me all ready to talk about that business.”

And he passed on.

“That is more than I shall be,” said Mr. Muller to himself. “I wonder if there is such a thing as a sunken ship on the place?”

And he went to sleep and dreamed that he had gone to bed in a ship that was buried three hundred feet under mud and sand; and he was in a great deal of trouble when he thought how difficult it would be for him to get out when it was time for him to go ashore for breakfast.

Phil and his uncle sat up until long after their usual bedtime. As soon as they were alone, Mr. Berkeley explained to Phil the reason he wrote the note which had caused the boy so much grief.

“When I walked over this way on the morning of that day,” said Mr. Berkeley. “I came after Old Bruden, because I thought it would be a good thing to have a gun out there in the woods with me, and I picked up a little fellow on the road to send to the house. I thought it very likely you

would come running to meet me when you heard where I was, and so I did not stay by the bridge where the boy left me, but went over to the top of one of the little hills in the field, to watch and see who came from the house.

“I knew very well that if you came to me you would wheedle and coax me into giving up my splendid plan of study. When I saw you coming, and without the gun, as if my wishes and requests were not worth considering, I was a little provoked, and hurried down the other side of the hill, and by the time you reached the bridge I was far enough away. I did not, however, go back to my little hut, and after a time I began to think how disappointed you must have been when you came to the bridge and did not find me. It also dawned upon me that I was not behaving in a very sensible manner. It would be much better to go home and get what I wanted and trust to you not to annoy me with questions as to where I was and what I was doing. So, in the course of the afternoon, I started back for Hyson Hall, thinking it very likely I should spend the night there and return to my hut the next day; but when I came near the house, I heard those bells and soon saw them on the roof. I don’t know of any sound that could have affected me more disagreeably than the jingling of those bells. I knew that you under-

stood how much I disliked them, and it pained me to think you should hang them up while I was gone. And when I considered that you knew I had been in the neighborhood that morning, it seemed to me that you had hung them in revenge for my having taken myself out of your way. I was so angry at this imagined insult that I marched off and mailed you that abominable note."

"It's all right now, uncle," said Phil. "I don't wonder you thought I was a contemptible rascal. If I hadn't been in such a hurry to start off and look for you, Emile would not have dared to come here, the bells would not have been hung up, you would have been home in the afternoon, and everything would have been all right."

"It often happens that way, my boy," said Mr. Berkeley. "But you have had a hard time, Phil, and you have done splendidly. If any mistakes were made they were not your fault. You have saved me this property, and I shall never forget what I owe you. When I went away, I expected you would have some bothers and perplexities, but I thought it would be a useful experience for you to weather through them. It would have been impossible for me to imagine that you would have such anxieties and trials as those you have gone through. And, although I always had a

good opinion of you, I would not have supposed that you would have stood up against your difficulties so manfully."

As to the deficiency in money for household and other expenses, Mr. Berkeley easily explained that. He had expected a certain sum which was owing to him to be paid on his account to Mr. Welford, which that gentleman had not received. If this payment had been properly made, there would have been no difficulty in carrying on the Hyson Hall establishment until Mr. Berkeley's return.

"But, uncle," said Phil, as they were preparing to go up-stairs, "there's one thing I don't understand. You said, in the long letter you left for me when you went away, that you couldn't stay at home any longer because life here was so monotonous. Now, it seems to me it must have been ever so much more monotonous in a little log hut in the woods, where you never saw a soul. Of course I can understand why you couldn't study here, where you are interrupted every five minutes by some of us."

"It was the monotony of interruption that disturbed me," said Mr. Berkeley, smiling. "Every day it was the same thing. I would plan out a certain amount of reading, and the day would often pass without my opening a book. In the

woods it was very different. Law is generally considered a very dry and musty subject, but my studies were very fresh and interesting to me. The whole affair seemed like an adventure. It reminded me of part of my life in South America, and I enjoyed it greatly. I was not only leading an untrammelled life in the woods, but I was doing something useful and sensible besides, and this is more than I can say of a good deal of the out-door life of my earlier years. And, then, there was the spice of running away from a tyrannical nephew. That made it all the jollier, don't you see?"

"No, I don't," said Phil. "But some of these days I may run away from you, just to see how pleasant it is."

"If you do," said Mr. Berkeley, "I'll let old Touron buy Hyson Hall, and when you are tired of roving you can come back and live with Emile."

When the two went up-stairs, Chap called out to them from his room. He had evidently been keeping himself awake on purpose to hail them when they came up.

"Phil," cried Chap, "did you ask your uncle if he saw anything of the lonely sumach when he was in the Green Swamp?"

"That boy again!" groaned Mr. Muller, as he turned over in his bed.

"No, I didn't," said Phil. "I never thought of it. But you have heard of that lonely sumach, haven't you, uncle? Did you see it?"

Mr. Berkeley stopped at the door of Chap's room, which, like the other bedrooms on that floor, opened on the large central hall.

"Yes, I have heard of it," he said, "and I am quite sure I have found it. It was not far from my hut, and I did most of my reading in its shade."

"In its shade!" cried both of the boys together.

"Yes," said Mr. Berkeley. "The ground under it was smooth and grassy, and, as it stands by itself on a little hill, there was more air out there than in the thick woods about my hut."

"Then it isn't poisonous, after all!" cried Chap, who was sitting up in bed.

"No," said Mr. Berkeley, "I certainly did not find it so."

"That is a disappointment!" cried Chap.

"What!" exclaimed Phil. "Did you want me to have a dead uncle?"

"No," replied Chap, "I didn't mean that; but still—— Oh, you understand! Good-night!"

And he lay down, and drew the bed-covers around his ears.

He had earnestly longed to find that tree, and

now, alas! it was not a deadly tree at all. One of life's charms had vanished.

The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Berkeley noticed Old Bruden standing in a corner of the hall, where Mr. Muller had placed it when he brought it home, the afternoon before. Taking up the gun, Mr. Berkeley raised the hammers, and then remarked,—

“Have you forgotten, Phil, that it is against orders to leave a loaded gun about the house in this way? There is a fresh cap on one of these barrels.”

Phil explained that he had had so much to think about the night before he had not noticed the gun at all.

Thereupon Mr. Berkeley, having put upon the other nipple a percussion-cap, which Mr. Muller produced from one of his pockets, went out on the porch to fire out the loads.

He pointed the gun over the lawn, where there was nothing that could be injured, and pulled one trigger. A cap snapped. Then the other trigger. Another snap.

“What is the matter with this old gun?” said Mr. Berkeley, coming into the hall. “I must draw the loads. Where is the ramrod?”

Phil got it from the umbrella-rack, where he had put it when he brought it home. Mr. Berke-

ley then fixed the screw and, running the ramrod into one of the barrels, proceeded to draw the load. First he pulled out a piece of raw cotton, then another piece, and then some more.

"Why, this load seems to be all wadding!" said Mr. Berkeley, in surprise. "Here is quite a pile of it."

The interested and somewhat amazed group standing around the gun was now joined by Jenny.

"Them's Susan's loads," she said to Phil. "She put 'em in when she took the gun up to her room. She wanted to make sure it wouldn't go off."

"And she certainly did make sure of it!" cried Phil, as his uncle pulled the cotton from the other barrel.

Phil was now obliged to tell the story of Susan and the gun, though he touched so lightly upon the bad points of it that Chap stuck his hands in his pockets and strutted up and down in disgust. Mr. Berkeley understood the story quite well, although he chose to say little about it.

"Susan is a prudent woman," he remarked, "and her cotton loads have probably saved at least one of our lives."



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ONE FELLOW WHO WAS LEFT YET.

DURING the morning, Mr. Berkeley and Phil were busily engaged in farm affairs with Jenny's father and Joel. Chap had thought of going home, but Mr. Berkeley had urged him not to break up the family party so soon, and Mr. Muller remained until he should have an opportunity of entering upon his own business.

Chap was delighted when he saw the man with the black straw hat sitting alone under one of the trees on the lawn, but it cannot be truthfully said that the heart of Mr. Muller leaped very high for joy when he saw the long-legged boy striding down upon him.

“What about that wreck?” said Chap. “I’ve been just aching for a chance to speak to you. We ought to go right to work. It won’t do to let this family slide back again into misery the very

minute they've got a little hoist out of it. From what I can make out, there'll be lots of money wanted yet. And that wreck has got to be bounced out of the mud in short order. I suppose you are all ready to pitch right in. Have you told Mr. Berkeley what you're here for?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Muller, "I haven't yet. There has been no time. And I am sure there is no hurry about that wreck. It has been in the mud a long time, and it will wait there till we want it."

"No, it won't," cried Chap. "No, it won't. There isn't a night but I tremble for that wreck. That French boy knows all about it, and you can't tell when he and his father will come up the river in a boat, with divers and submarine armor, and they'll have a hole cut in the side of that ship, and all the treasure-boxes taken out, before we know a thing about it."

"That would be bad, indeed," said Mr. Muller, "but I don't see how it is to be prevented, unless a guard is kept up on the river-bank."

"Prevented!" cried Chap. "The way to prevent their doing it is to do it ourselves—slam-bang! without waiting a minute longer than we can help."

Mr. Muller did not know what reply to make to his enthusiastic companion.

“Suppose we go and look at this wreck,” he said, after a moment’s thought.

This suited Chap exactly, and without further ado the two proceeded to the river-bank. The tide was not very low, and only the extreme ends of the exposed ribs of the treasure-ship could be seen.

“She is pretty well covered up,” remarked Mr. Muller.

“You can see more of her at low tide,” said Chap, “but we don’t care anything about that part of the ship. That is the bow, and most likely there is nothing in it but sailors’ clothes and such stuff.”

“Which would be dreadfully old-fashioned now,” remarked Mr. Muller.

“The part we want to get at,” continued Chap, “is the stern, which is out there in deep water, and never can be seen at all. The treasure would, very naturally, be in that part of the ship.”

“Quite likely,” said Mr. Muller, “but it is frightful to think of its being out there in deep water.”

“Yes,” said Chap, “and, what is more, one side of it must be jammed against the shore, and pretty well covered up with mud.”

“The channel must come quite near the bank in this part of the river,” said Mr. Muller.

“Oh, yes,” replied Chap, “a good stone’s-throw from where we stand it is deep enough to float anything. Down below here, near the place where the Thomas Wistar was run ashore,—they’ve towed her off now,—it’s shallow ever so far out, and it’s pretty much the same thing above.”

Mr. Muller looked about the place where he was standing, and seemed to be considering something.

“Well,” said Chap, impatiently, “what do you say? Are you ready to go right ahead with this thing? You may think it is none of my business, but I’ve been pushing on the affair for ever so long, and I want to be on hand when anything is done.”

“I have no doubt you will be,” said Mr. Muller, —“no doubt of it at all. But I really cannot counsel immediate action in this matter. A great many things have to be considered first. I think we had better let the subject drop for the present.”

“All right!” said Chap. “Drop her!”

And, without another word, he marched off, leaving Mr. Muller standing on the river-bank.

Disgusted with human beings, especially with the man in the black straw hat, Chap walked directly home.

“I did think,” he said to himself, “that when I got to work with a man something would be done;

but men are just as pokey and shilly-shallying as boys. But there is one fellow left yet!" he continued, giving himself a bold slap on the chest; and, with a stern and determined mind, the one fellow who was left yet strode rapidly home.

In the course of a few days Mr. Berkeley made arrangements by which he procured the money to refund to the three boys the amount they had received from the owners of the Thomas Wistar. Phil declared he did not want his share, but his uncle insisted he should take it. It had been fairly earned by his own exertions, and he must keep it. The sum was accordingly handed over to Mr. Welford to be invested in Phil's name.

"What are you going to do with your money?" asked Chap, the first time he met Phœnix after the distribution.

"We have been talking the matter over a great deal at our house," said the stout Phœnix, "and I haven't made up my mind whether I'll put my money into land or into education."

"The whole of it into one of them?" eagerly asked Chap.

"Yes," said Phœnix. "Mother wants me to go to college; but father says if I buy a piece of land down below our place, and get it ditched, and put into grass, and cleared up, it will be a valuable property by the time I am married."

"Married!" cried Chap, in accents of scorn. "Think of a fellow waiting to get the good of his money till he is married!"

"From what I have heard the folks say," said Phœnix, "I should think that would be the best time to get the good of it. But I don't know that I'll put my money into land. I may switch off into a straight-out education. Mother says that is better than any property. What are you going to do with yours?"

"Well," said Chap, "a part of mine is to be put into stocks, along with Phil's. That is what they all thought was the best thing to do with it for the present. But there's a certain lot of it I'm going to keep for my own square, particular, and not-to-be-talked-about purposes, and no questions asked or answered."

"All right," said Phœnix, "nobody is asking any."

The next day Chap made a visit to the city, and spent the whole day there. He paid his own way. It was vacation time, and no one interfered with him.

On his return he was asked a good many questions, especially by Helen, but answered none. For several days he spent a good deal of time away from home, but he did not go to Hyson Hall, nor did Phœnix see anything of him.

Mr. Berkeley was not long in making up his mind not to return to his hut in the woods; but, although his affairs demanded his attention at home, he determined to continue the study of law, for he was not too old to achieve success in this profession, and he felt he ought to devote his life to something for which he was better suited than scientific farming.

A small room in the third story was fitted up as his study. His books and papers were taken there, and strict orders were given that during certain hours in the day he was not to be disturbed on any pretext.

It was much easier to observe these orders than it would have been before the time in which our story began; for now John Morgan—Jenny's father—was regularly installed as farmer and general manager on the Hyson Hall estate, while Joel was retained as his assistant.

Phil was much pleased with the new arrangement, and listened with great interest to all the plans which were discussed.

This pleased Mr. Berkeley, for he wanted Phil to like a country life, and to understand better than he had ever done how to manage with comfort and profit an estate like Hyson Hall.

It may be here remarked that Emile never came to Boontown to stand his trial. His father

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thought it prudent to send him to France on business, and his bail was forfeited.

The man with the black straw hat had some time since told his business and gone away. He had come to Hyson Hall to try to induce Mr. Berkeley to build a town. This seemed like a vast enterprise to suggest to a private gentleman, but Mr. Muller had studied the subject for a long time, and had very clear and definite ideas about it.

He was quite ready to prove that it would be an easy thing for Mr. Berkeley to have a small town on his property, if the work should be begun in the way which he (Mr. Muller) recommended. It was plain enough that a town was needed in this locality. The people living along the river for several miles below had to go to Boontown for their groceries and other merchandise, and their crops and produce had to be hauled to that place to be shipped to the city and other points.

Moreover, a little town or village on this beautiful part of the river-bank would attract people who would like to have a rural home not too far from the city. Nothing of this kind was offered at Boontown. That place was not attractive, and its river front was particularly disagreeable.

If Mr. Berkeley would lay out his land along the river in building lots, and buy, perhaps, some adjoining tracts, and then build a wharf, so that

the steamboats could stop there, and put up a store, the thing would be begun, and the place would then grow of itself. Mr. Muller was ready to stock and take charge of the store. That was in his line of business.

Mr. Berkeley listened with great attention to the long discourse of his visitor, and then remarked that the idea was not a new one, and had been seriously thought of before.

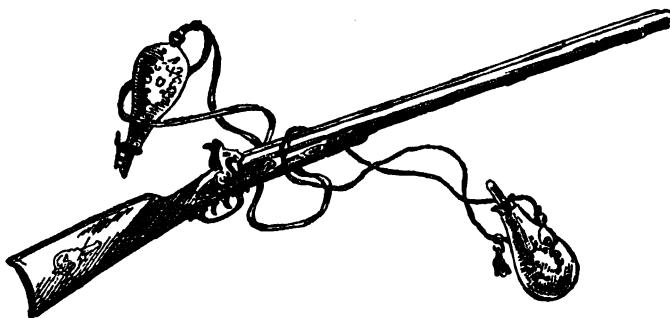
His father had greatly desired to have a small settlement on his place, and had gone so far as to put up a wharf, so that people could come up here by boat and look at the property, and the produce of the surrounding country could be shipped from this point. But the first steamboat that stopped there struck on a sunken wreck, that lay not far from the wharf, and old Mr. Berkeley had to pay for the damages done to her. Disgusted with this, he had had the wharf taken down, and the piles pulled up, for fear that some other steamboat would make a stop, and more damages would have to be paid.

“But could not a wharf be built farther out, or at some other point?” asked Mr. Muller.

“There is no other point suitable for a steamboat-landing on my property,” said Mr. Berkeley. “The channel makes a bend inland here, and above and below the water is shallow for some

distance out ; besides it would be very expensive to build a wharf into the deep water beyond the sunken wreck. It is not the part that you may see sticking out of the mud that is dangerous," he continued. "It is another portion of the vessel which is sunk in the channel, but not far from the bank. The condition of my fortune does not warrant me in removing this wreck, which has been there so long that it has probably become a part of the bank. You see, therefore, that as it is impossible for us to have a steamboat wharf here at present, it is useless to talk of starting a town."

Thus the matter was disposed of, and Mr. Muller discovered that although he had not had the slightest idea of the fact when he told Chap the story of the three brothers, the sunken ship had, after all, very much to do with his business at Hyson Hall.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE GREAT MOMENT ARRIVES.

EARLY one afternoon Chap Webster might have been seen rowing a little boat, near the water's edge, in front of the Hyson Hall estate. In the stern of the boat was a box with a piece of canvas thrown over it, and in the bow were several large packages. These things had been brought home by Chap, in a wagon, that morning from Boontown, where they had been sent to him from the city.

When Chap reached a spot nearly over the sunken vessel—and he found the place very easily, for it was marked by a little floating buoy which he had put there after many previous soundings and surveys—he anchored his boat with a long rope, and began to carry out the great scheme on which his mind had so long been set.

A large package securely tied up in India-

rubber cloth, with the ends of a long, double wire inserted into it, was lowered to the bottom of the river, where it rested as near as possible to the side of the sunken ship. The upper ends of the double wire were then attached to the ends of two long, covered wires, which lay in separate coils in the boat. This being done, Chap pulled up his anchor and slowly paddled his boat to shore, carefully letting out his wires with one hand as he paddled with the other.

This was quite a difficult thing to do, and it would have been much better if he had had one of the other boys to help him. But he had come to the conclusion that there must be no faint hearts in this matter, and he had said nothing to them about it.

When he reached the shore, he fastened the boat to a stake, and taking one coil of wire in his arms, he carried it up to the fence, which stood at a little distance from the water's edge, carefully uncoiling it as he proceeded.

Then he laid it along the bottom of the fence, until he came to a little brook which ran to the river through a pasture-field, and which was bordered by thick bushes. He laid the wire along the edge of this brook until it was all uncoiled. Then he went to his boat and brought the other coil of wire, laying it by the side of the first.

Having thus carried these wires up the brook as far as they would reach, he went to the boat and brought his box, which contained an electric battery, to the spot where the farthest ends of his wires lay.

It was evident that all the distances had been measured and the localities carefully surveyed. Having placed the box under some overhanging bushes, where it could not readily be seen, Chap walked along the line of his wires, carefully concealing them with leaves and weeds wherever he thought it was necessary.

There were no cattle in the fields that afternoon, and as people seldom passed that way, it was likely that his wires would be unnoticed and undisturbed for an hour or so at least. Having settled these matters to his satisfaction, Chap got into his boat and rowed away.

The first thing Chap did on reaching home was to go to Helen and tell her all about this great affair.

His sister had often heard him talk of the wreck and the treasure he thought it contained; but when she heard that Chap had made all the arrangements for blowing the ship out of the water, and that it was to be done that very afternoon, she was indeed astounded.

“Don’t you intend to tell the other boys?” she asked.

“No,” he answered. “They’ll be sure to want to put it off for this thing or that, and might want to wait till we could have tin hoppers made to catch the money in, or something of that kind. I’ve been waiting long enough to do this thing, and I’m not going to hold back another day. But I just felt I couldn’t keep it all to myself, so I told you, for I know you’re the kind of girl who won’t hinder. Now I’m going to take you down with me to see the thing blow up. Would you like that?”

“Oh, yes!” said Helen, her eyes sparkling, “if we don’t have to go too near.”

“We’ll keep out of danger,” said Chap. “But I’m going to do something more for you. I’m going to let you touch her off!”

“Me!” cried Helen. “Oh, Chap! I couldn’t do that!”

“Why, it is nothing to do,” said Chap. “We’ll be far enough away, and you’ve only got to touch a knob. Get your hat and come along. We’re going to have the grandest blow-up ever heard of in these parts.”

A little nervous as to the danger, but wild with excitement as to what was going to happen, Helen ran for her hat, and the two started away, walking across the fields to the place where the battery had been concealed.

On the way, Chap explained to his sister all his arrangements.

“According to what I can make out,” said he, “I’ve got enough giant-powder sunk by the side of that wreck to blow up two ships.”

“I shouldn’t think they’d sell that stuff to a boy,” said Helen.

“It isn’t everybody who takes me for a child,” said Chap, loftily, and made no further remarks on the subject.

“But how are you going to get the treasure?” asked Helen, presently. . “Won’t it be scattered all over, in every direction?”

“Now, look here, Helen,” said Chap, “I don’t want you to be making objections. I didn’t let you into this thing for that purpose. I’ve put the powder on the outside of the wreck, and it’s my opinion that most everything will be blown in shore. If the money is stowed away in iron boxes, perhaps they’ll come down without breaking. But we can’t calculate for everything. The main thing is to blow her up.”

Soon after this the two arrived at their destination, and, uncovering his battery, Chap exhibited it to his sister, and explained its action.

One of the wires which came from the jar which contained his simple battery he united to the end of one of his wires from the river. The

end of the other wire was laid on a small board which covered one end of the box, and was held in position by two wooden pegs. Directly over this end of the wire was the end of the other short wire which came from the battery, and which was fastened under a little wooden spring, which Chap had made, and to the top of which he had fixed a small knob or button.

“Now, Helen,” said Chap, when everything had been made ready, “you can see just how the thing will work. When you press that knob, and push the spring down, the two ends of the wires will touch, and the electric circuit will be complete. These wires, which are insulated by being covered with tape dipped in paraffine, except these upper ends, which don’t need insulating, as they lie on wood, which is a non-conductor, extend from the battery down to the giant-powder at the bottom of the river. The two ends which are in the powder are united by a little piece of thin platinum wire. When the circuit is completed by pressing down the wire fastened to the spring, the electricity runs along one wire, to come back by the other, but when it reaches the little platinum wire it makes it red-hot, and that explodes the powder. So, you see, it is all simple enough.”

“Yes,” said Helen, a little hesitatingly, “but

you must have studied a good deal to understand it all, and these things must have cost a good deal of money, too."

"I don't mind expending time or capital," said Chap, "when I am going to do anything of importance. And now I think everything is ready."

He then ran to a fence near by, and got up on the top rails, from which he could get a view of the river for some distance up and down. Jumping to the ground, he hastened back to Helen.

"There is no boat nor anything in sight!" he cried, "and the great moment has arrived. Just push down that knob."

"Oh, Chap, I can't do it!" cried Helen, springing back.

"But you must! I want you to have the honor of touching her off. It's nothing to do, and it can't hurt you. Just press down the knob."

With trembling hand, Helen put her finger on the little knob and pressed it down.

A great boom, not loud, but deep and heavy, shook the air, and Chap, who was standing outside the bushes, saw a column of water rise from the river, together with a mass of mud and timbers. Smaller objects flew high into the air, and as the wind was blowing from the river, a sudden shower of spray fell all around him, as if it had



**A column of water rose from the river, together with a mass of
mud and timbers**

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been raining. Then pieces of wood came thumping down, some in the field near by.

One large stick, nearly three feet long, stuck into the ground not a dozen yards from the spot where Helen sat, her hands before her eyes.

Chap rushed to his sister, as if he would throw himself over her to protect her, but there was no need of that. Everything that was coming down had come.

“Oh, Helen!” he cried. “I might have killed you! I ought to have had ever so much longer wires. But there is no danger now. Let’s run down and see how it looks.”

Before they reached the water’s edge, it was easy to see that something very unusual had happened. The river was still heaving and tossing above the place of the explosion. The water was thick and dark with mud for some distance from the shore. Fresh mud was scattered over everything,—the leaves and trunks of trees, the grass, the ground. Pieces of timber, some half in and half out of the water, and some thrown high up on shore, lay scattered about, but nothing was floating on the surface of the river. All the woodwork of that vessel had become water-logged long before, and such of it as had fallen into the water had sunk again to the bottom.

With anxious eyes and hurried steps, Chap and

Helen went up and down the beach, looking here and there and everywhere, but they found no iron boxes, nor did they see a single piece of gold or silver.

Mr. Berkeley and Phil, with Phœnix Poole, were sitting on the porch at Hyson Hall, when they heard a great explosion down the river. There was no flash or smoke, but they saw black objects flying into the air.

They sprang to their feet, and Phœnix exclaimed,—

“I’ll bet a thousand dollars that is Chap. He’s blown up the ship.”

Without another word all three started off at full speed for the river-bank. When they reached the spot, they found Chap and Helen still searching among the fallen timbers and clots of mud.

When the story had been told, and Chap had explained everything to the astonished Mr. Berkeley, Phil exclaimed,—

“And haven’t you found any money?”

“Not a cent,” said Chap, ruefully. “I believe the crew must have been paid off before they left the ship.”

Mr. Berkeley appeared much excited by what had occurred.

“Look here, young man,” he cried, clapping Chap on the shoulder, “you needn’t trouble your-

self about not finding any money. If you have really blown that old wreck out of the channel, we'll have a town here, and I'll give you a corner lot. I never thought the thing could be done so easily."

"Where is the scow?" said Phil. "If we could get a grapnel we might fish up something."

The boys looked up and down the beach, but saw no scow. And then Chap pulled a long face.

"I forgot the scow was moored here," he said. "I guess she's blown to flinders. But I'll pay you for it, sir."

"Not a bit of it," cried Mr. Berkeley. "The old tub is not worth considering. Judging from the timber lying around here, there can't be much of the wreck left. You didn't think, young lady," said he, addressing Helen, "that when you touched that button you were starting a town?"

"No, indeed, sir!" said Helen, with brightening eyes.

"But such was the fact," said Mr. Berkeley; "and if we ever have the town it shall be called Helena."

When the bed of the river was afterwards examined, it was found that there remained no obstructions to navigation which had not been so shattered and loosened by the explosion that they could easily be removed, and there was no reason

why a wharf at that point could not be used by river steamboats.

It was not long before Mr. Muller received a letter from Mr. Berkeley assuring him of his hearty co-operation in the matter of the town of Helena, which town ultimately proved a success, and became a source of so much profit to Mr. Berkeley that the incumbrances upon Hyson Hall were removed long before he had made out his titles to his Western lands.

The first time the man with the black straw hat met Chap, he warmly shook him by the hand.

"I didn't suppose anything would come of your explosive ideas," he said, "but you have been the best man of us all. Mr. Berkeley says he is going to make you a landed proprietor."

"I don't want any town-lots," said Chap. "What I want is to be captain of a tug-boat."

"All right," said Mr. Muller. "If the town ever owns a tug-boat, I'll see that you command her."

On two stout brackets, over the dining-room mantel-piece at Hyson Hall, and secured to the wall by a stout hasp and padlock, hangs Old Bruden.

When Mr. Berkeley heard Susan's story about the gun, her superstition pleased his fancy, for he was an imaginative man.

“It shall always be the master’s gun,” he said, when he hung it there; “and when we shall have built our town, and paid our debts, and I shall go to the city to practise law, Hyson Hall shall belong to my dear Phil, and his shall be the master’s gun.”

THE END.



